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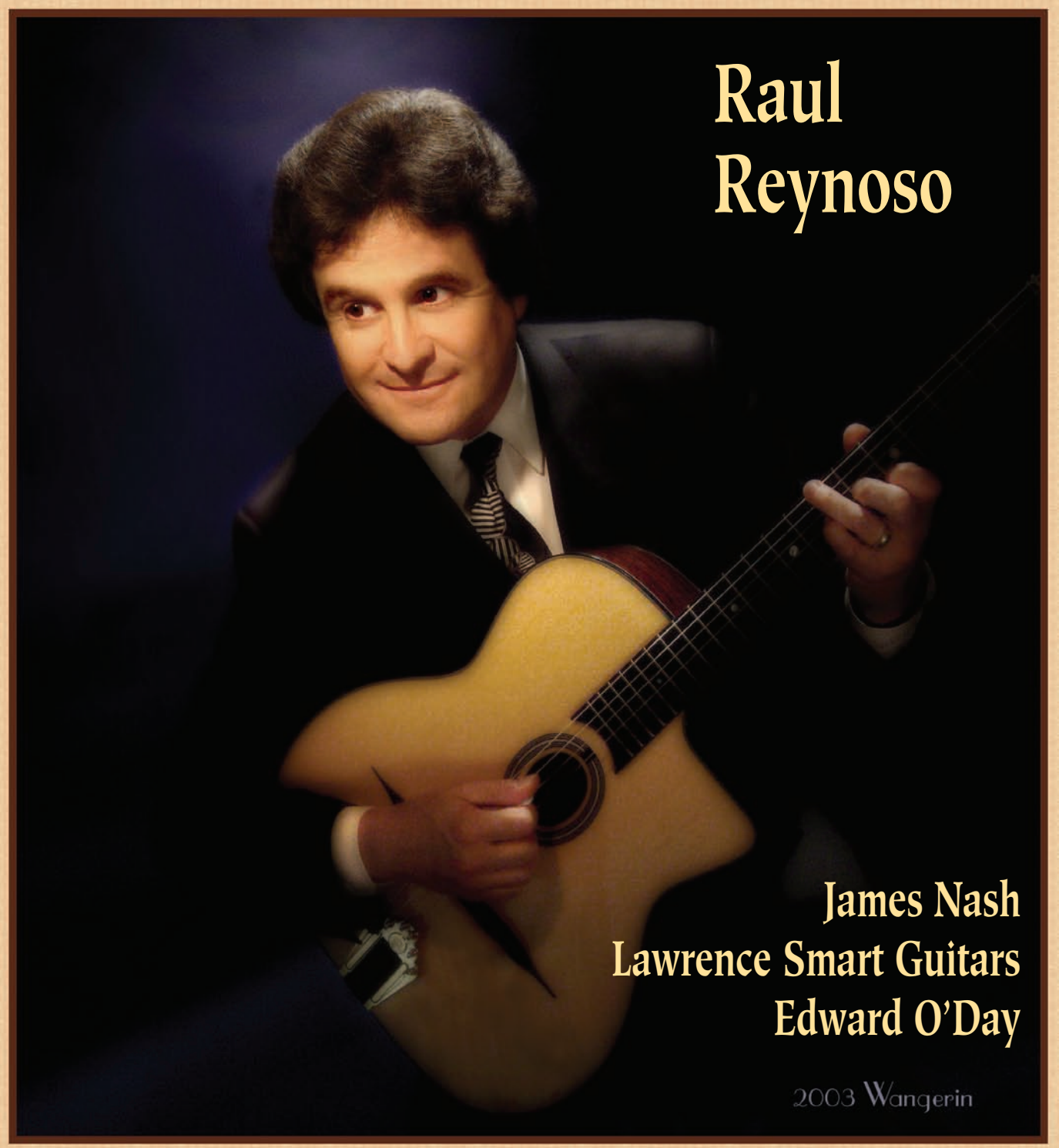
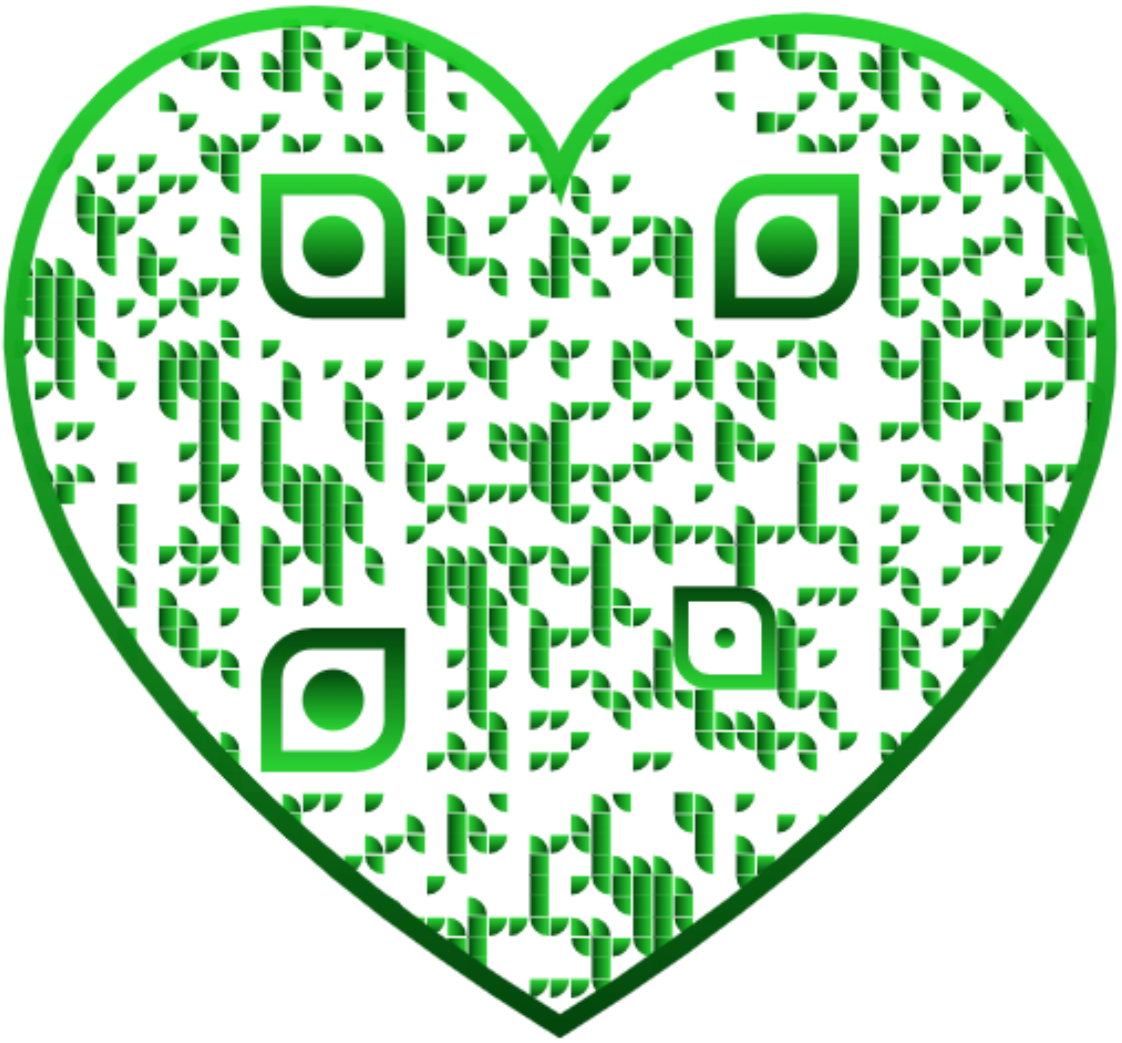
Volume 7, Number 6 September/October 2003





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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Raul Reynoso 4
Flatpicking Profile: James Nash 26
Lawrence Smart Guitars 33
Alternate Tuning: "Fisher's Hornpipe" 40
John Jorgenson as Django Reinhardt 67
Guitar Review: Saga D250M 77

COLUMNS

Witch of the Wave 10
Craig Vance
Beginner's Page: Up-the-Neck "Old Joe Clark" 12
Dan Huckabee
Flatpick Rhythm: "Wildwood Flower" Rhythm 14
Joe Carr
Flatpicking Folk/Acoustic Rock: "Drift Away" 16
John Tindel
Maintenance & Repair: Drop Filling Lacquer 18
Frank Ford
Kaufman's Corner: "Shenandoah" 21
Steve Kaufman
Adventures in Acoustic Music: Style Study—Gypsy Style 24
John Carlini
The Solo Flatpicker: Stuff to do in D 37
Dan Crary
Break Time: Double-Stops Part II 43
Chris Jones
Gypsy Jazz Guitar: New String Exercises II 45
Paul Mehling
The O-Zone: "Rock the Cradle Joe" 47
Orrin Star
Belts and "Pretty Polly" 50
Dix Bruce
Music Theory: "Rider" Kick-off 53
Mike Maddux
Nashville Flattop: Dynamics 56
Brad Davis
Gospel Guitar: Great Speckled Bird" 57
Harold Streeter
Flatpicking the Classics: "Copthorne Blues" 61
Bill Bay
Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes: Northern Gigs 63
Adam Granger
Exploring Bluegrass: "Chug-A-Lug" 65
Steve Pottier
Eclectic Acoustic: Lady Be Good Rhythm 71
John McGann

DEPARTMENTS

Tab Book Highlight: Edward O'Day 72
Reviews 76

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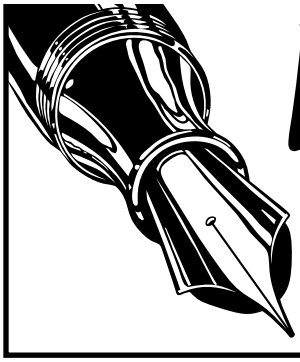


EDITOR'S PAGE

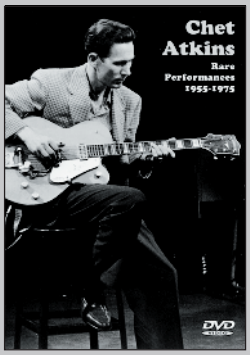
New CD Release
Flatpicking Favorites: Hot & Spicy

On 30 September 2003 FGM Records will release a new CD titled *Flatpicking Favorites: Hot & Spicy*. I predict that this CD will be one of the landmark recordings in the history of flatpicking guitar. It is going to change the way you think about flatpicking. It is going to "raise the bar" for flatpickers. You are going to listen and say, "This is amazing!"—just like I did.

The idea for this CD came from requests from readers and the people who have visited our booth at bluegrass festivals. A common question is, "Do you have anything that is just 'hot' flatpicking instrumentals." We really didn't, so I decided to create something. I compiled a list of flatpickers who I wanted to be on the recording and asked them to play standard jam session fiddle tunes and play them "hot and fast." The first session for this recording occurred in Nashville last October. The players who were involved in that session included David Grier, Bryan Sutton, Jim Hurst, Brad Davis, Cody Kilby, and Tim May. They each selected tunes and played in duet with one or two of the other players at the session. I asked for "hot and fast" and for the most part, that is what I got, but something else happened—they also played "different." They each were tired of playing the same old tunes the same old way and so they decided not only to play them "hot" but to also make them "spicy." The results were amazing and so I asked everyone else who was invited to play on the project to do that same, "make it hot, but also spice it up a bit...do something different."

The flatpickers who are featured on this project include: David Grier, Bryan Sutton, Jim Hurst, Brad Davis, Cody Kilby, Tim May, Scott Nygaard, Jim Nunally, Gary Cook, Mike Maddux, Mark Cosgrove, Kenny Smith, Robin Kessinger, Steve Kaufman, Roy Curry, Scott Fore, Andy Falco, Bull Harman, Cecil Tinnon, Chris Eldgridge, Tim Stafford, Wyatt Rice, and Larry Keel. In this list we have seven Winfield winners and four IBMA Guitar Player of the Year winners. There are 16 cuts on the recording, all guitar duets. The songs are: Wheel Hoss, Gold Rush, Farewell Blues, Lonesome Fiddle Blues, Back Up and Push, Forked Deer, Arkansas Traveler, Flop-Eared Mule, Cattle In The Cane, Cherokee Shuffle, Big Sandy River, Bill Cheathum, Salt Creek, Panhandle Rag, Lonesome Rueben, and Leather Britches....like you've never heard them before.

If you love great flatpicking music, and if you want to learn some great new approaches, great new licks, and great new phrasing to the standard tunes that you already know, you will want to pick up a copy of this new disc. We will be shipping this CD by the end of September, but you can call to order at any time. Call 800-413-8296, or check www.flatpickingmercantile.com.



Chet Atkins
Rare Performances 1955-1975
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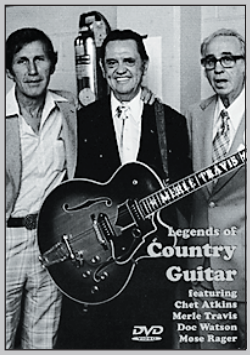

Legends of Country Guitar
Atkins/Travis/Rager/Watson
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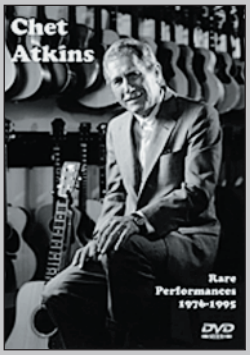

Chet Atkins
Rare Performances 1975-1995
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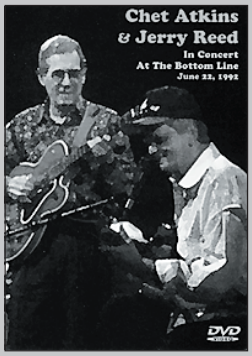

Chet Atkins & Jerry Reed
At the Bottom Line, 1992
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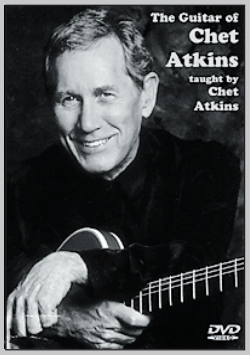

The Guitar of Chet Atkins
Taught by Chet Atkins
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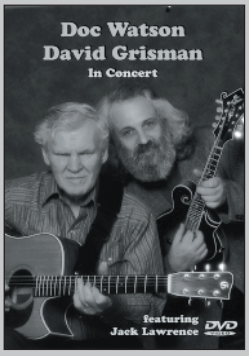

Doc Watson & David Grisman
In Concert
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Doc's Guitar Jam
Watson/Rice/Crary/Kaufman
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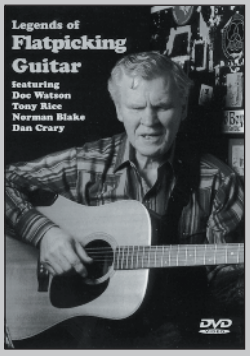

Legends of Flatpicking Guitar
Watson/Rice/Blake/Crary
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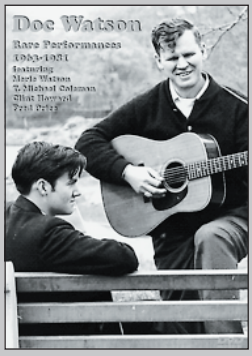

Doc Watson
Rare Performances 1962-1981
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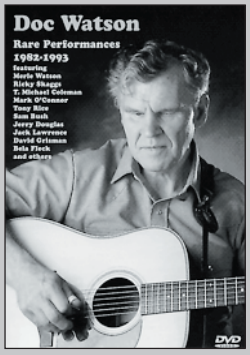

Doc Watson
Rare Performances 1982-1993
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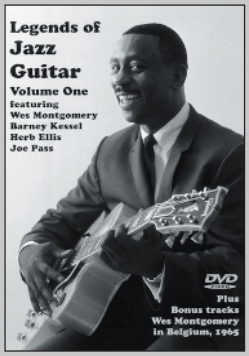

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Legends of Jazz Guitar #2
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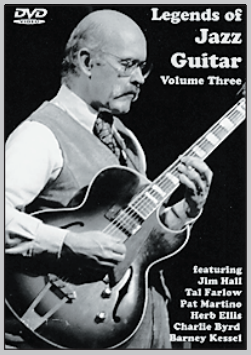

Legends of Jazz Guitar #3
Hall/Farlow/Martino...
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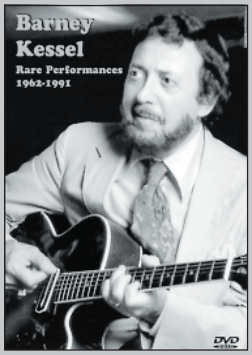

Barney Kessel
Rare Performances 1962-1991
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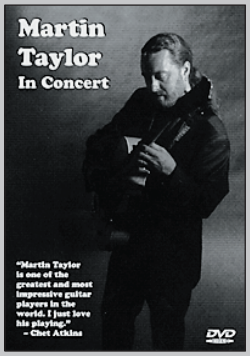

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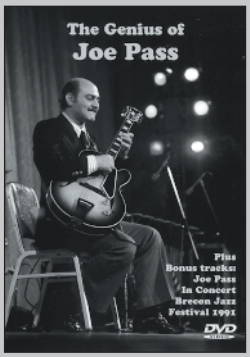

The Genius of Joe Pass
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Great Guitars of Jazz
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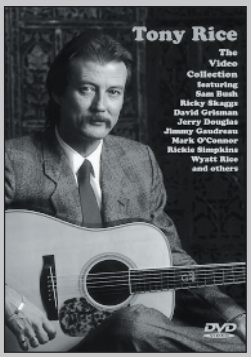

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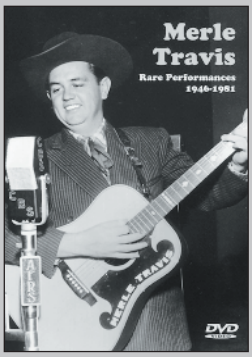

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Raul Reynoso

Raul Reynoso and Paul Shelasky performing at the 2003 Winter NAMM show in Los Angeles

Written by David McCarty

Listen to Raul Reynoso swing fervently through the changes of a Django standard like "Daphne" or his own Gypsy jazz-inspired composition "Matelot" and you'd be hard-pressed to imagine him wearing a ten-gallon Stetson and playing Western cowboy ballads. He glides so lightly and perfectly through blazing Gypsy swing passages that it might be harder still to think of him as a hardcore bluegrass flatpicker who twice won the California state flatpicking championship and backed up bluegrass banjo legend Larry McNeely with some of the hottest flatpicking work around at the time.

But the fact that Raul has so thoroughly absorbed such diverse guitar styles—and that he's equally fluent in them all—is a huge tribute to the wealth of musicianship welling up from this Hispanic-born Californian. Like so many others, he started playing guitar after he heard the Beatles on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and rapidly grew to devour guitar styles ranging from Charlie Christian and Les Paul, bluegrass players like Doc Watson and local California legend Clarence White, and the Western swing players like Eldon Shamblin and Tiny Moore in his all-consuming quest to understand this fascinating, bedeviling instrument.

Born in 1954, Raul had, he says, "a couple of uncles who played guitar in the Hispanic community." Guitar trios were the "in thing" among the Latin community after World War Two, and young Raul learned his first chords from one uncle who bought him a guitar for $2.50 at a swap meet. He found a picture book of guitar chords at his aunt's and "memorized it over the summer. I used that to figure stuff off records. It was real good ear training."

He went on that way, absorbing various guitar influences until another momentous encounter changed his musical path. "I heard Doc [Watson] and everything changed," he told *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. "I got rid of the fingerpicks and went head over heels into the flatpicking thing." At the time, he was learning on an old guitar and when he'd break a string, he would rummage in his father's fishing tackle box to find a piece of monofilament nylon that approximately matched the diameter of the string he needed to replace. "I did that until I pulled the bridge off that guitar," he recalls today.

Raul went through a couple of inexpensive Takamines before hearing about an old country player with a guitar for sale. "It was a 1943 D-18 and he was the second owner," he explained, adding, "It's still one of my favorite guitars." Over the years, Reynoso's acquired a highly impressive stable of musical tools, including a late 1930s Gibson ES-130 and matching EH-150 amp like those used by bebop jazz guitar pioneer Charlie Christian, an original 1940 Selmer Modele Django Reinhardt (serial #485), and a 1933 Martin OM-28 that is "one of the best guitars I ever played," he swears. On a trip to Japan, he also discovered one of the exceedingly rare, handmade original Ibanez Maccaferri copies made in the 1980s.

After he was turned onto bluegrass, Reynoso started playing in area contests. He eventually started winning, which brought him to the attention of the leading local bluegrass musicians. His first professional experience was playing with Larry McNeely, one of the first progressive banjo players who took Reynoso with him on tour to major festivals and to the Grand Ole Opry where he got to hang out with country stars like Roy Acuff.

At the same time he was studying bluegrass guitar, though, the multi-talented fledgling picker was absorbing Western swing influences, jazz sounds, and other guitar styles. "I was basically eating up anything I could get my hands on and incorporating that into my flatpicking so it made me sound different," Reynoso explains. A regular gig with the Thunder Mountain Boys, a tourist attraction band at Disneyland in Anaheim, gave him the

chance to play bluegrass gigs half the day and Dixieland jazz the other half.

Raul's fascination with Django Reinhardt's astonishing acoustic jazz guitar work began when he heard some of the original records as he sought out an ever-widening circle of guitar influences. "I was reading magazine interviews with guys like Dan Crary and Norman Blake and Django's name kept cropping up. I found a few of his records and thought, 'Here is the ultimate flatpicker. Here was everything a guitarist would want to do and more.' But I couldn't find people to play it because it was hard to find people who were into that music. I'd show some things to a few bluegrass guys who might know Grisman's version of 'Minor Swing,' but that was all," he recalls. When Raul hooked up with banjo stylist McNeely, however, he discovered that in addition to being a master bluegrass banjo player, Larry also was an accomplished guitarist who also started turning his bandmate onto records from Reinhardt's Quintet of the Hot Club of France. "He was a Django nut who recorded 'Honeysuckle Rose.' We used to play Django stuff. Larry was a wonderful player in that style."

Reynoso immediately began transcribing Reinhardt's guitar solos and studying the techniques that created the unique guitar sounds he found so fascinating. "I learned the old-fashioned way. I put Django records on at 16 rpm and tried to figure it out," he says today. Watching his Thunder Mountain bandmate Doug Maddox play tenor banjo helped instill an appreciation of Reinhardt's right-hand technique, since Django originally started on banjo-guitar. "Then John Jorgenson and I would sit down with the recordings and figure out how to play particular passages with only two fingers," he says of their effort to understand how Reinhardt could play such intricate, high-speed lines with his fire-crippled left hand. "I forced the right hand to follow the left hand. After a period of time things opened up for me," he recalls. Reynoso's passion for this foreign, exotic guitar music was further fueled when a local record store in California started carrying records from more modern Gypsy jazz artists like Raphael Fays. "It got me going to hear people who could play with the same power and intensity as Django," he recalls. "It was like watching someone break the four-minute mile; I knew it could be done and I had to have at it. I'd get any albums I could get, but there was no Internet; no way to get any information."

While playing bluegrass and Dixieland at Disneyland after his stint with McNeely, however, he had discovered his fellow Thunder Mountain musicians were also swing lovers. Doug Maddox bought a Selmer after playing Raul's, and John Jorgenson got one that, according to local legend, at one time belonged to Django himself, who supposedly gave it to a local bandleader. Eventually, they created the Rhythm Brothers (www.rhythmbrothers.com), which performed Hot Club of France-style swing tunes to entertain the thrill-seekers in the Magic Kingdom and elsewhere. They recorded one album in 1983, the long out-of-print *Singin' and Swingin'* which eventually led to Raul appearing on Jorgenson's classic *After You've Gone* LP with David Grisman and Darol Anger, which later was re-released on CD.

But as a working musician in America, Raul had to pay attention to economic realities as much as his musical inclinations. In the 80s and 90s, there just wasn't much of a market for acoustic swing and Hot Club style jazz, but another music he loved did provide another employment opportunity —Western swing. "Bob Wills was a real favorite of mine, along with Eldon Shamblin and Tiny Moore and Johnny Gimble on mandolin," he explained. Joining forces with Mike Fleming and Dave Jackson, they created a modern cowboy band called New West (www.cowboyband.com) in which Raul sang and played guitar and mandolin. On their first two albums, Raul plays both rhythm and lead guitar on his Martin OM and the 12-fret, D-hole Ibanez Maccaferri copy, which at first seems a strange instrument to use for playing Western swing and

Raul (back) with Larry McNeely (right) and Johnny Pierce (left) circa 1980

Raul Reynoso with New West: Raul (left), Michael Fleming (center), and David Jackson (right)

reinterpretations of the great cowboy music of the 40s and 50s. "The guys in the band liked the Maccaferri copy better," Reynoso says of his decision to use the exotic, European-styled guitar in such an all-American band. "It complimented Michael's Shanti guitar and gave the band a unique sound. When we go to Elko (a major cowboy music and poetry event in Nevada) and other cowboy poetry gigs with that guitar, I've had some strange looks, but no one has ever said they didn't like it."

That Ibanez gets a serious workout from Reynoso, who uses it frequently as a gig guitar, saving his vintage Selmer for recording and special concerts. He also owns a 1990s Selmer replica from Maurice Dupont, an MD-50 model in Brazilian rosewood that he describes as "a great, great guitar." A fan of the Dell'Arte instruments (www.dellarteinstruments.com) produced by John Kinnard and Alain Cola of San Diego, Reynoso also owns a 14-fret maple Anounman model and a new Angelo Debarre model in koa that he uses frequently with the Rhythm Brothers. Most recently, he helped Dell'Arte's effort to reproduce the original Selmer guitars by allowing Kinnard and Cola to use his Selmer #485 as a template for the new limited edition Manouche model Dell'Arte introduced this year as a tribute to the 50th anniversary of Django's death. "It's made right," he says of the replica guitars. "Everyone was trying to do it. Until this guitar, I thought the Dupont was the best replica, but (Dell'Arte) really got the sound and the look right for an affordable price."

Like most Gypsy jazz players, Raul used heavy tortoiseshell picks until they became too expensive and hard to find to use professionally. He switched to the Jim Dunlop Tortex picks, but now has joined the growing number of top players using Michel Wegen's exquisitely crafted guitar picks (www.wegenpicks.com). "The Wegen picks are great," he says enthusiastically. "Everyone I show them to wants to use them." Raul is using the Gypsypick and the Twin models most of the time, but will switch to the extremely heavy Fattone model for some things. "I like the way they're already tapered and beveled, like they're already worn in," he says of the dense picks that are so carefully tapered Wegen must make specific models for right and left-handed players. He strings his Gypsy jazz guitars with John Pearse Nuages strings or the new Dell'Arte strings, which he describes as "just wonderful."

Ask this guitar-enchanted musician which music he would choose if told he could play only Western swing or Gypsy jazz the rest of his life and he pauses to reflect a moment before answering. "I think it would be Gypsy jazz, because the Django thing is so close to my heart," he replies thoughtfully. "From the first time I heard it, it has been a profound inspiration. To hear my name being mentioned alongside people you admire in that style is a great honor."

His Gypsy jazz solo CD, *Royal Street*, stands as a landmark achievement in the revival of Hot Club-style jazz on this side of the Atlantic. Not only is it one of the first albums in that style to be released by an American artist, but it also possesses a deep love for the music and the passion and musical discipline and technique needed to play it very, very well. Seven Reynoso originals grace the disk, and his eponymous tribute to Django sideman Matelot Ferre has been picked up by other players and is well on its way to becoming a standard. Raul's great passion for the music and his inspirational approach to playing it helped him secure one of the album's standout musicians. While in Chicago for a corporate gig, he and Rhythm Brothers violinist Paul Shelasky happened to meet swing violin legend and Chicago native Johnny Frigo. Impressed by Raul's musical skills and charisma, Frigo agreed not only to play on *Royal Street*, but even made special travel arrangements to Los Angeles to help keep the project within Reynoso's cash-strapped budget. "He wanted to do the project enough to do that for me," Raul says, shaking his head even today at the thought that a world-class jazz performer would go so far out of his way to accommodate his request.

The CD, released in 1997, immediately established Raul Reynoso as one of the top Gypsy jazz guitarists in North America, and soon the word spread to Europe. Copies of his CD were sent to a number of European promoters, who enthusiastically responded and helped him gain exposure and credibility among the European Hot Club scene. By the time he made his first visit to the legendary Django festival at Samois outside Paris, he was surprised to find that his name was already familiar to players such as Stochelo Rosenberg, and he found himself invited to jam in some of the notoriously cliquish sessions that often are not open to gadjo (non-Gypsy) players.

Part of that acclaim comes from Reynoso's highly musical, expressive tone. Rather than rip a barrage of sharp-toned notes from his guitar during a typical Gypsy jazz solo, Reynoso's style embraces a more dynamic and lyrical approach. "That's one thing I strive for before anything else," he explained. "These guitars don't have to sound harsh." He takes great care in his right hand attack, varying the spot where

he strikes the string and the pressure he uses to develop a more rounded tone. It's a more "American" sound based on his past experiences as a flatpicker, one that helps set him apart slightly from the aggressive tone favored by many European players.

In June, Raul returned to Samois with John Jorgenson. The two were not scheduled to perform, but went to learn and jam much the way American flatpickers head to Winfield every September. They took a digital camcorder to make an informal video diary of their trip. Says Reynoso, "It was an incredible, successful trip for me. The music was fantastic, the jams were great. This music is in real good hands for the future."

For his own future, Raul plans to record a follow-up to *Royal Street* later this year. He's discussed some sort of joint project with Jorgenson, who's been occupying himself playing with Bryan Sutton, Richard Smith, and Stuart Duncan in the Hot Club of Nashville. A transcription book of his heads and solos from *Royal Street* could happen in the future, as well as a more general instruction book on Gypsy jazz guitar.

Raul Reynoso and John Jorgenson at the Winter 2003 NAMM show in Anahiem, CA

"There's probably room for me to do that because I've done this so long and there are so many things I've learned over the years," he reports.

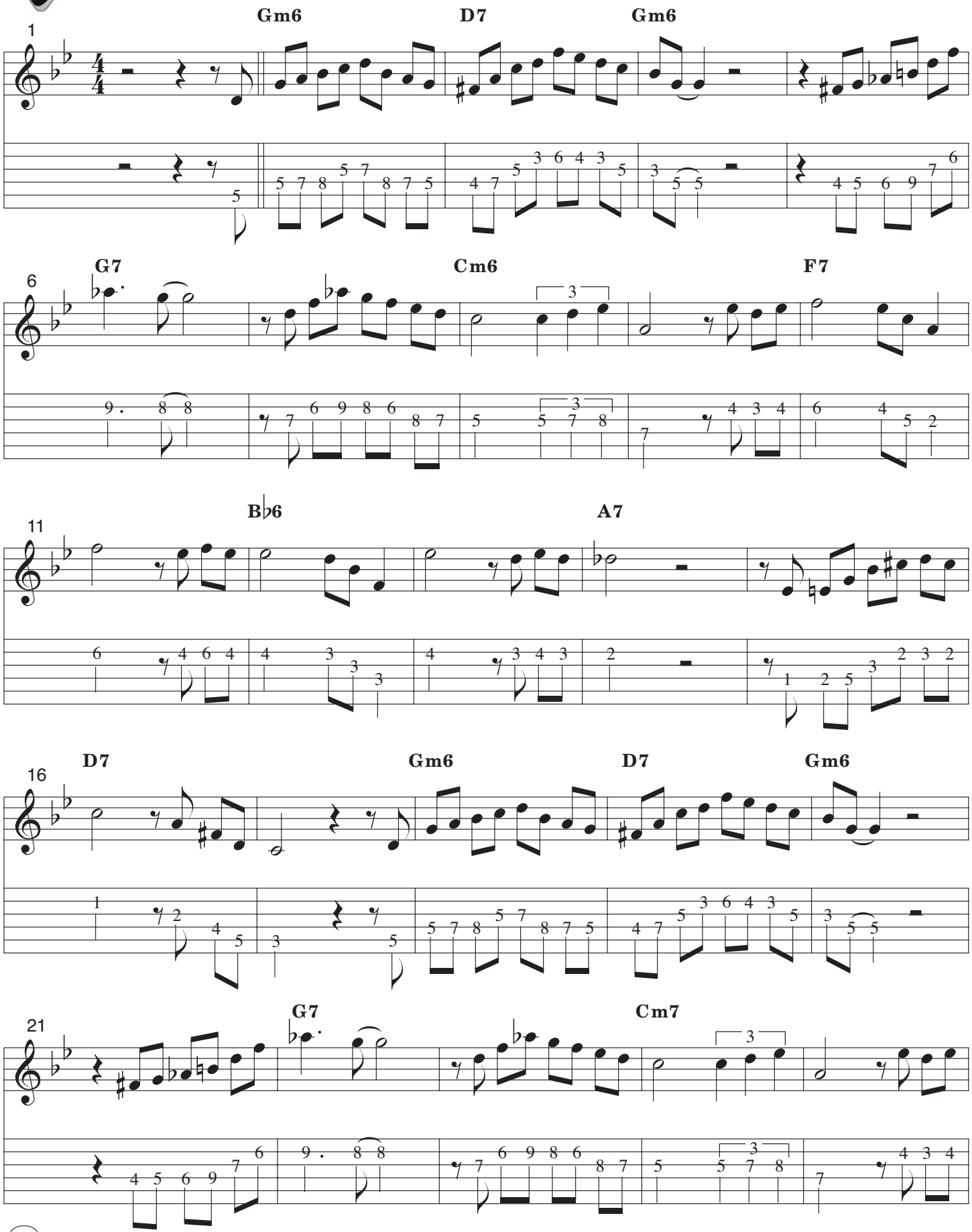
The Part Time Mt. Boys: (left to right) Paul Shelasky, Kenny Blackwell, Raul Reynoso, Bill Bryson

Raul Reynoso Discography

- Larry McNeely Band: *Power Play*, 1980 (out of print)
- Rhythm Brothers: *Singin' And Swingin'* (with John Jorgenson), 1983 (out of print) (http://www.rhythmbrothers.com)
- Thunder Mt. Boys: *Carolina to California*, 1983 (out of print)
- John Jorgenson: *After You've Gone*, 1988
- Beppe Gambetta: *Dialogs*, 1988 (Reynoso: Guitar, Engineer)
- New West: *Wild Places*, 1995 (Reynoso: Guitar, Mandolin, Vocals)
- Raul Reynoso: *Royal Street*, 1997
- New West: *Texas Blues*, 1997 (Reynoso: Guitar, Mandolin, Vocals)
- Banjomania: *Dueling Banjomania*, 1997 (Reynoso: Guitar, Mandolin)
- Various Artists: *Bluegrass Guitars That Destroyed the World*, 2000
- Tom Corbett: *Upstairs at Charlie's*, 2001 (Reynoso: Guitar)
- New West: *Buckaroo Dream*, 2002 (Reynoso: Producer, Guitar, Mandolin, Vocals)
- Django Festival: *Gypsy Swing Today Vol. 2*

Audio CD
Track 3

Matelot

Wrtitten and Transcribed by
Raul Reynoso

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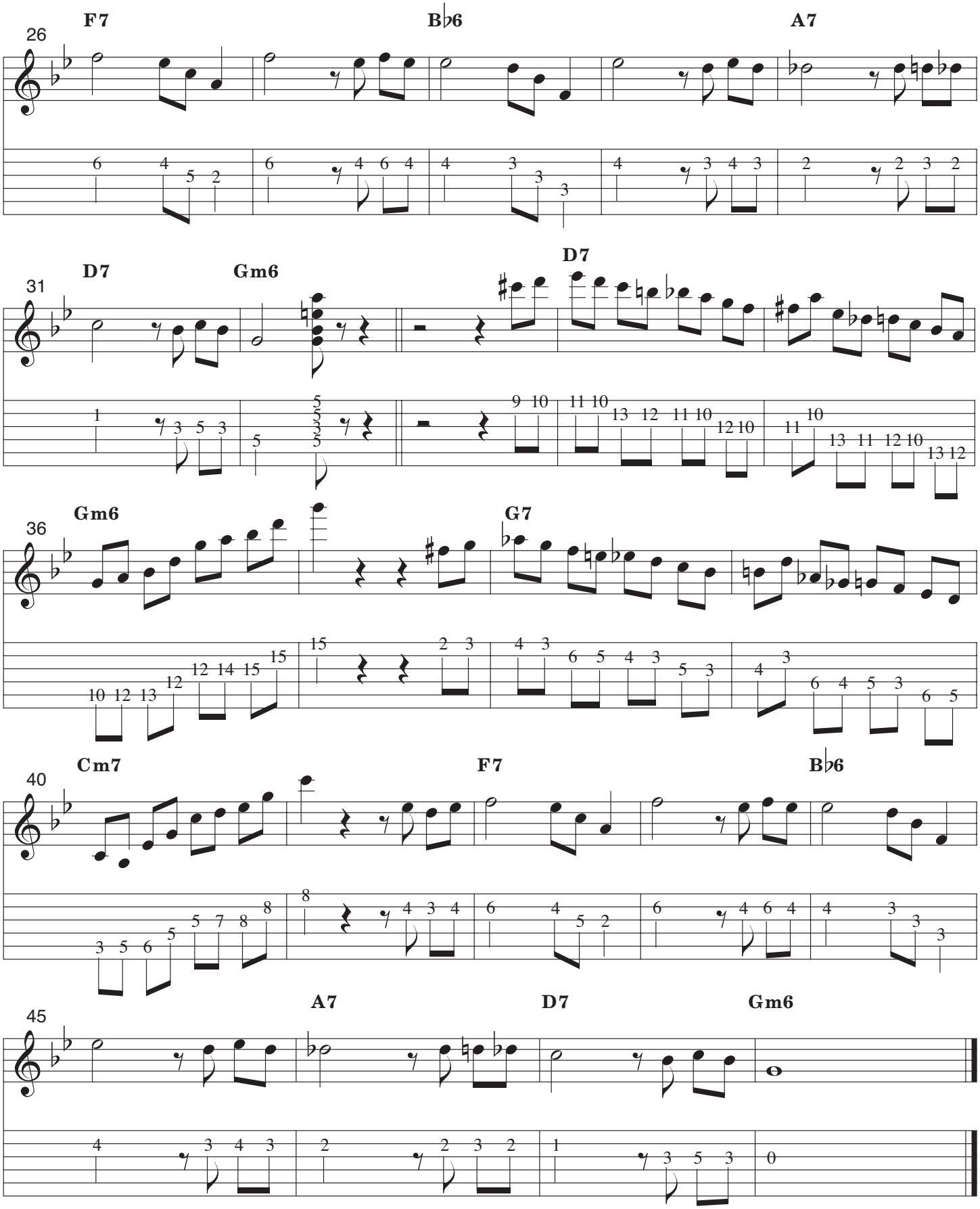
Witch of the Wave

by Craig Vance

The title of this tune conjures up images that Stephen King might use as a theme for an upcoming novel, but in fact, it is a spicy little fiddle tune that has lurked deep in the shadows of the past. The melody line is consistent and tangible, only resting in change-up portions between the A and B part. The tune's format is A-A-B-A.

Again, I learned this from a Norman recording that I purchased way back in the vinyl era. Technology has resurrected this gem as a compact disc from Flying Fish, *Fields of November/Old and New* (FF70004). It's a double CD that combines those two albums from the early 70s. Great stuff!

Through research I've found that this tune also bears the title of "Witch of the Wake," in retrospect a title even more Stephen King-ish. Regardless, the tune remains the same. Very few frills with this piece, but miss one note and you are right back to the drawing board. It's a kick to play, and should give you good ammo in any jam session. If you happen to play the fiddle or mandolin, it is far easier to tackle this one because of the fretboard spacing on the B part.

Anyhow—pick it like ya mean it!

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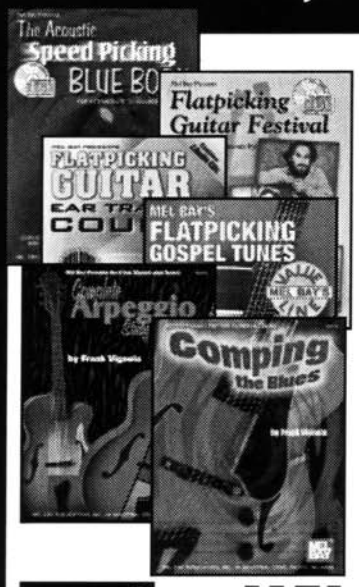

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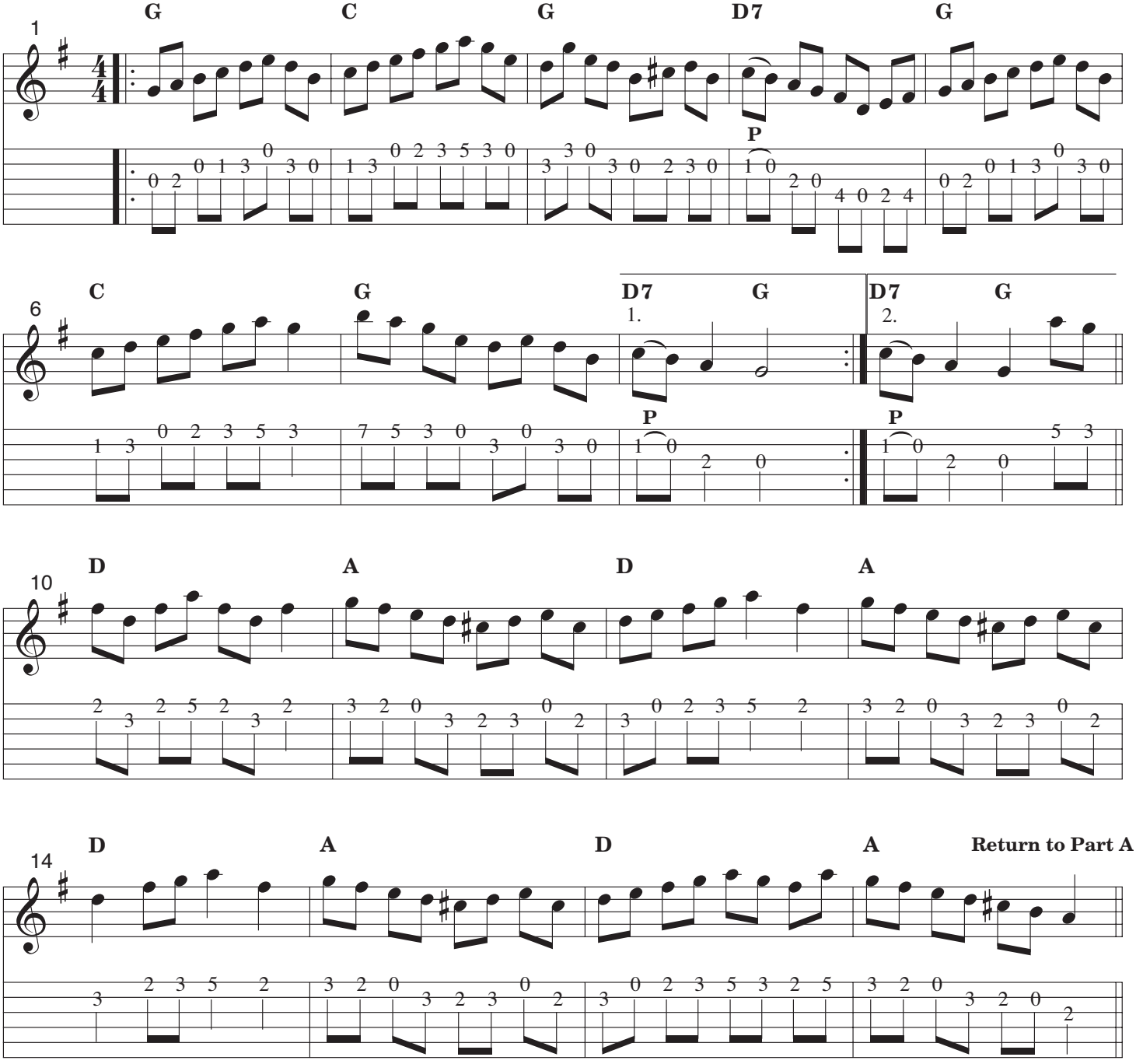
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Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

Old Joe Clark Up-The-Neck

Last issue we ventured into the unknown by learning our first "up-the-neck" solo. Many of you may have felt like that stuff is only for the advanced hot players, but I congratulate you for giving it a try. It can only get easier from here on out. Don't worry if you didn't perfect "Red Haired Boy," because we just want to start getting acquainted with the way it feels.

I promised this to be a series, so let's try another. "Old Joe Clark" lays out pretty well up the neck. The reaches are reasonably short and it's not too acrobatic. But why should you bother to spend time on this exercise? One obvious reason is that you'll now have a variation to play. It will be quite impressive when you play it once in "open position" and once an octave higher. The exercise of transposing a fiddle tune from the first five frets to a closed position up the neck is altogether different than learning a major scale up the neck because a fiddle tune is real music. The relationship between scales and songs is the same as individual words and completed sentences: learning a fiddle tune up the neck has more value than learning a scale up the neck.

You need to watch out for a few technique issues. Your home base will be a shape that places your first finger at the 10th fret. Your farthest reach will be the 13th fret. You may choose to use your third finger by employing a "spread" positioning, or your fourth finger if you want to give your pinky more practice. You'll find that it's easy to "cheat" with your third finger, because the frets are so close together this far up the neck. This is a technique that Eric Clapton is known for in up-the-neck blues soloing. In fact, Clapton will use his first finger at the 10th fret and his second finger at the 12th fret and sometimes plays entire solos with only his first and second fingers. Further, you'll find yourself trying different ways to jump from string to string, which is similar to the problems we encountered in "Red Haired Boy." I want you to experiment with various ways to deal with each fingering problem. There's not a one-best-absolute way to attack this tune the way it lays out on the neck, so your personal experimentation will help your instrumental progress.

The open position version of "Old Joe Clark" is on my instruction course *Bluegrass Guitar the Right Way is the Easy Way Vol 1*. If you don't happen to play this tune in open position, maybe you could try to transpose this up-the-neck version an octave lower in open position.

If you have any questions you can give me a call toll free at 800-543-6125 or check our website (www.musicians-workshop.com).

Maybe we'll continue this up-the-neck stuff for a few more issues and we'll just show those "advanced guys" that "up-the-neck" isn't just for hot guys anymore.

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Old Joe Clark

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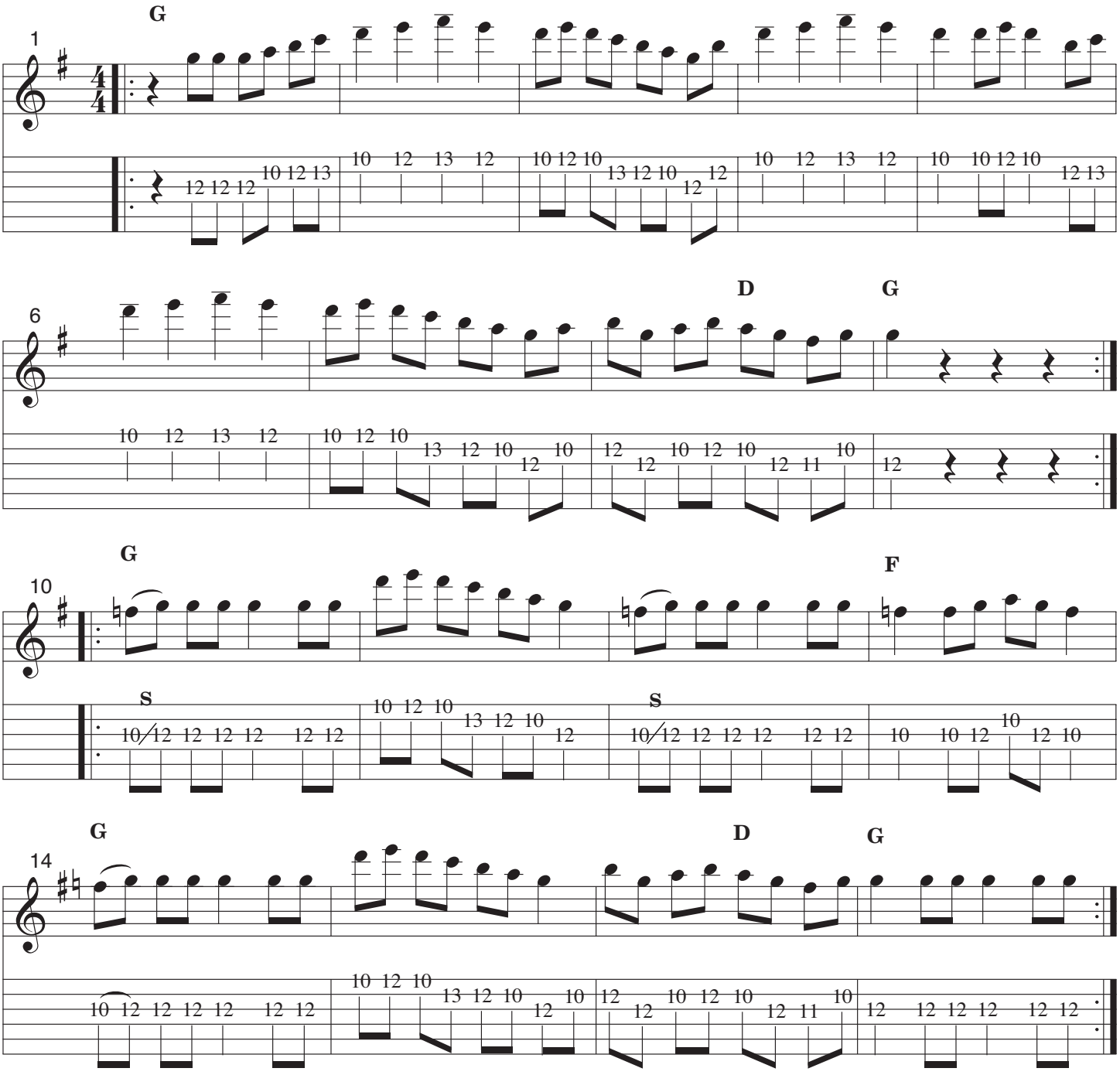
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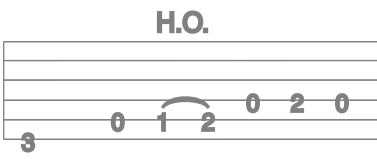

by Joe Carr

Audio CD Track 9

Playing Rhythm on Flatpicking Standards: Wildwood Flower

In the last columns, we have been looking at various ways to play rhythm guitar to the Top Ten flatpicking tunes. At #7 on the list is the all-time favorite "Wildwood Flower." Originally recorded in the 1930s by country music's legendary Carter Family, Maybelle Carter's arrangement of this classic became the model of what is known as the "Carter style." This attractive style sounds very complete as a solo style because the lead bass notes are accompanied by rhythmic and changing chord strums.

Complete as it is, rhythm guitarists often accompany "Wildwood Flower." The common chord changes are as follows.

C C G7 C C
C C G7 C C
C C F C
C C G7 C C

Notice that lines 1, 2 and 4 have five measures each. This oddity comes from the vocal version. The extra measures allow singers to catch their breath, gather their thoughts and remember the next words!

Some soloists delete these extra measures while some play one but not the others. With so many possible variations, a rhythm player must pay close attention and follow the lead. Remember, it's not about being right or wrong, but making nice music.

Banjo player Alan Munde has a unique variation which calls for these chords:

C C G7 C C
C C G7 C C
(C E) (Am C7) F C
C C G7 C C

Finally, we can substitute some minor chords and sprinkle in a diminished to get this use-at-your-own-risk version:

C Am (Dm G7) C C
C Am (Dm G7) C C
(C E) (Am C7) (F F#dim) C
C (C Am) (Dm G7) C C

Lines 1, 2 and 4 will probably work with any arrangement of the tune. Use line 3 carefully as it may clash.

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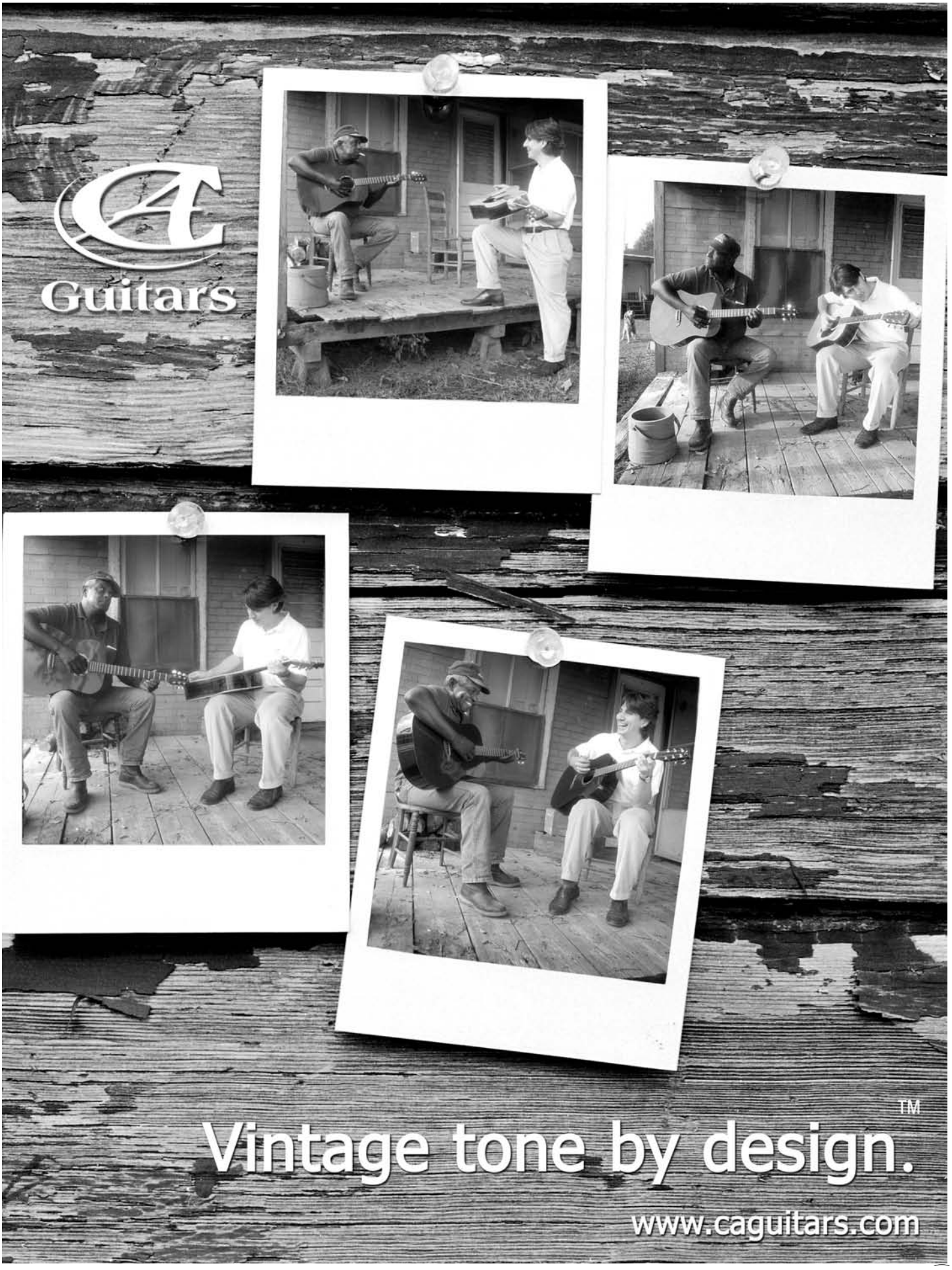
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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

"Gimme the Beat, Boys"

One of the many memorable characters I was lucky enough to meet during my years as a regular performer at one of Key West's' most famous watering holes was a very large, shaggy-haired blond fellow in a fringed, suede leather jacket. He strolled up to the stage right after my partner and I had just finished rocking the house with a fierce rendition of "Drift Away" and drawled out, "Ya'll did a fine job covering my song. After your set, come on over to the back bar and you can meet Loretta Lynn and I'll buy you a beer." And so I came to meet famous songwriter Paul Williams' lesser-known big brother, Mentor Williams, hanging out in the Keys on a Tuesday afternoon. Even if "Drift Away" was the only song he ever wrote (it wasn't), he'd still be tops in my book! The song is one of those perfect unions of lyric, melody, and timeless style and it's become an iconic anthem of sorts, thanks in part to the soulful vocals by singer Doby Gray. And a new younger generation is now being turned on to it courtesy of the hip hop artist Uncle Cracker's cover and subsequent hit.

I've written out the basic chord progression in G, and tabbed out a solo section example over the chorus chords. I've kept it simple and pretty much based on the melody, but try to use it as a jumping off point for something more adventurous with more of your own embellishments. Here are the chords:

Verse: C G C D G , C G , Am C
Chorus: G D C (twice)
Bridge: Am C G (twice)

Notice that the verses start on the IV chord. Notice as well that the shapes of the lead lines in the solo trace out arpeggiated chord forms (the D shape at the 7th fret for the G chord and the 2nd position barre chord shapes for the C and D chords). Simple chords; simple progression. But when put together the right way, with a heartfelt vocal and a tasty solo, true magic can be the result.

Verse 1:
Day after day I'm more confused. I look for the light in the pourin' rain.
That one game I don't intend to lose. I'm feeling the strain, ain't it a shame.

Chorus:
Gimme the beat boys and free my soul,
I wanna get lost in your rock and roll, and drift away.

Verse 2:
Sometimes I feel like I wastin' time, I don't understand half the things I do.
World outside looks so unkind. It's up to you to carry me through.

Bridge:
When my mind is free, you know a melody can move me.
When I'm feelin' blue, the guitar's comin' through to soothe me.

Verse 3:
Thanks for the joy that you've given me, I want you to know I believe in your song.
Rhythm and rhyme and harmony. You help me along, you're makin' me strong,

Chorus: repeat

I hope you enjoy "rockin' the room" with this one, and remember, don't forget your finger strengthening and speed exercises! Until next time, may you make a large noise.

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Drift Away

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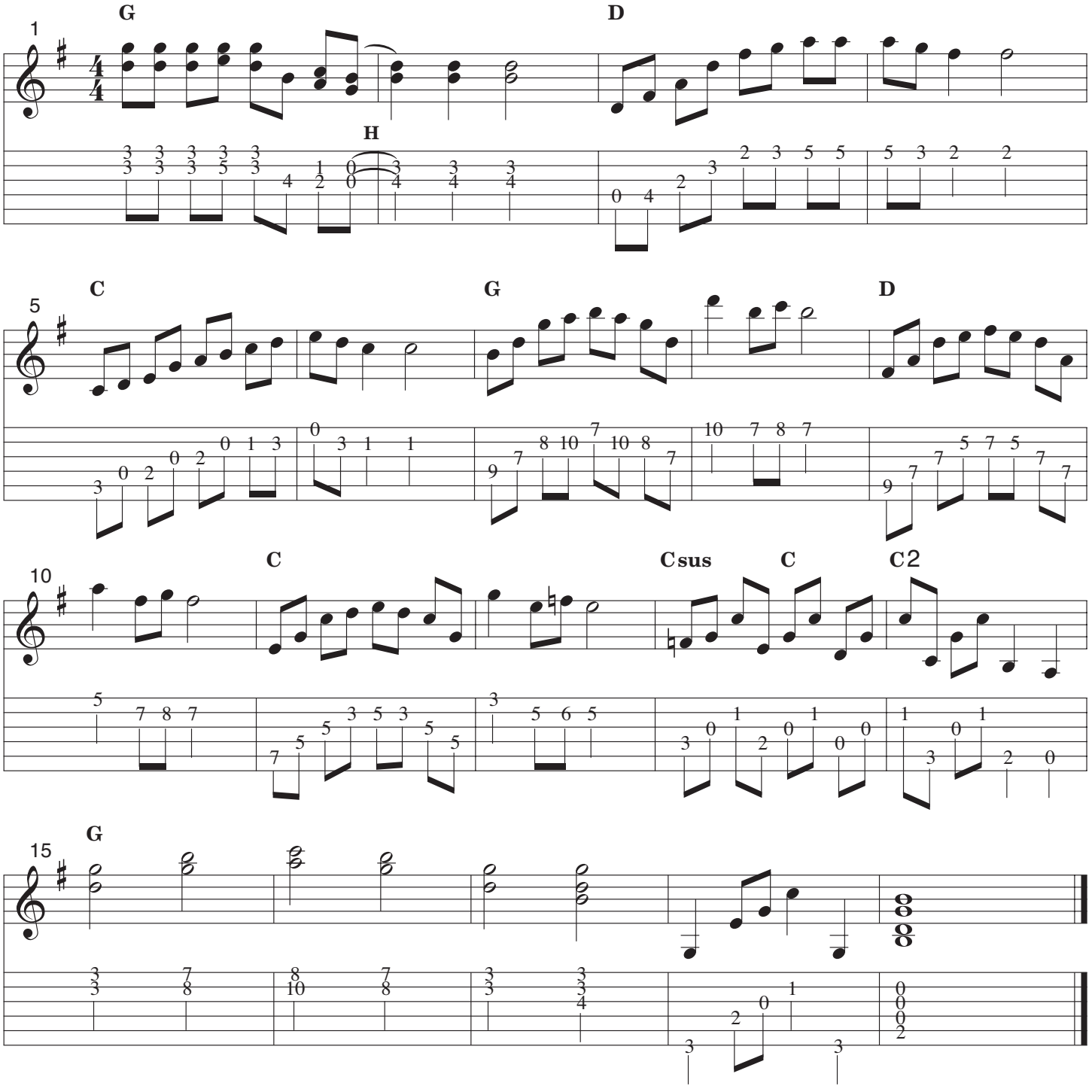
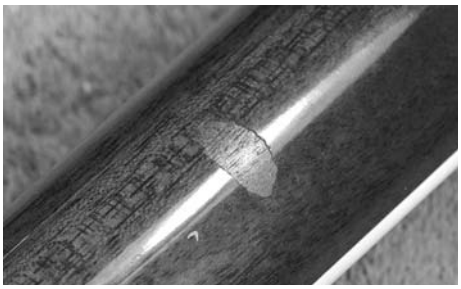

Guitar Maintenance and Repair

by Frank Ford

Drop Filling Lacquer

Last week the City came round and filled some potholes in my street. As I watched the craftsmen leveling the patches, I realized that they were doing what I do when I fill dents and chips in lacquer finishes. It's just a matter of scale—their finish is a thousand times thicker than mine. I was impressed with the quality of their job, too. It came out nice and level, and apart from color, it was just the same as the original finish.

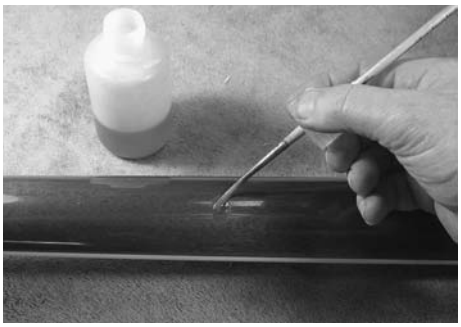
So, here's my pothole:



It's a patch of lacquer that was chipped off the back of a Martin guitar neck.

In my opinion the best thing about nitrocellulose lacquer is that it is an evaporative finish, meaning that it can always be re-dissolved in its original solvent. Other, more modern finishes are catalyzed polymers and as they cure, they undergo chemical changes that make them insoluble in anything. So, while I can fill and level such finishes, I don't have an easy time of making the filled area look seamless with the surrounding original finish.

As I brush new lacquer into the area, the solvent in it melts the leading edge of the surrounding finish:



Over the next few days, I'll continue to add more thin layers of new lacquer, brushing it carefully to avoid bubbles or runs. My goal is to have the new filled area a bit higher than the original surface, so I can level it without damage to the adjacent areas.

The street crew used a big heavy roller to mash the new fill and compact it until it was level with the old asphalt.

My lacquer has about 25% "solids," meaning that 75% of the thickness will go away as the solvents evaporate from it. Wherever the new lacquer's solvents touch the original lacquer, they will soften and cause that area to expand a bit in the process. After the first day of drying, the lacquer will have lost a majority of its volatile solvent, and it may even feel hard enough to level and polish. BUT, if I were to level the finish and get it nice and shiny, the remaining solvents would continue to evaporate, and by the next day the filled area would have sunk to a really noticeable extent, forming a shallow crater.

So, that's why I like to let the drop-filled area dry a good long while before leveling it. In fact, my new filled area is considerably thicker than the original finish that was applied to the guitar, so my drying time must be extended accordingly. Many factories get by with around ten days for an entire nitrocellulose lacquer finish. "Boutique" makers are more likely to allow double that time. With my thicker finish fill, I like to have a solid three weeks at least for a really good cure, after the last coat is applied.

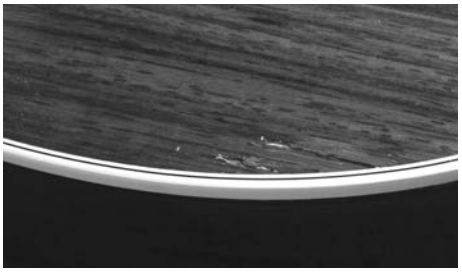
If the dent is really deep, I'll fill first with a nonshrinking catalyzed material, and use lacquer on top to match the original. Otherwise, the drying time could be nearly infinite!

Now that my fill is dry, I can scrape it level to the surrounding area. Here, I'm using a single edge razor blade, with regular thin plastic "mending" tape on each end to protect the area I don't want to scratch:

The idea is that the tape is a couple of thousandths of an inch thick, and with a little care I can scrape the new filled area down until the razor blade won't cut any more, leaving my new fill "proud" of the original by just that amount, only one or two thousandths.

Then, with a flat cork block and some 1200 grit waterproof sanding paper, I can level the finish safely, with only the most minimal scratching to polish when I buff it out:

Here's a similar job on the rosewood back of the same D-35:



Brushing the new lacquer into the chips:

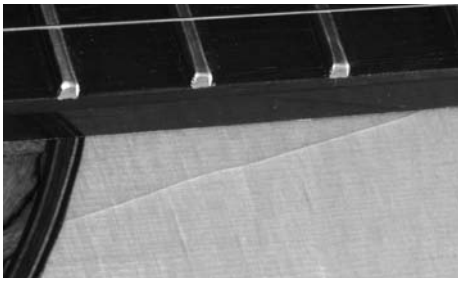
Scraping and sanding, using kerosene as a lubricant for the sandpaper:

Kerosene works better than water to keep the sandpaper from loading up, and it won't cause the grain to raise if it gets into any little cracks or voids in an old finish.

And, a trip to the buffer for that "like new" shine:

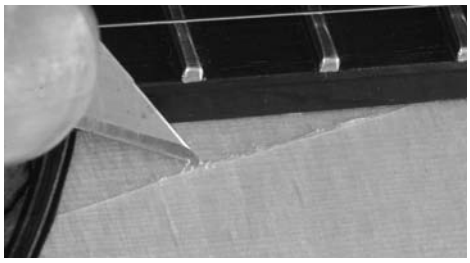
It's hard to see the improvement in these small pictures, but this fill came out very nicely, indeed:

One of the most disappointing things that can happen to a new lacquer finish is that insidious "weather checking." This new instrument arrived in our shop with a single nasty crack in the lacquer caused during shipment in winter:



Most of the time we regard finish checks as irreparable, because of the intensity of the work and the extent to which they tend to cover a surface. This time the crack was localized and alone, so I though I'd attack it. The cost (and risk) of sending the guitar back to the manufacturer was great enough that fixing the cracked finish seemed the wiser choice.

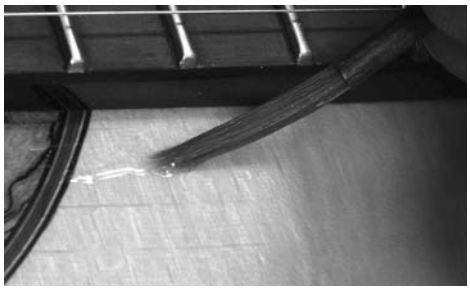
A finish crack like this one is so tight that even the lowest viscosity solvent is not likely to penetrate it to soften the original lacquer. I cut through the crack, widening it into a "V" shape, all the way down to the spruce top:



Then with a toothpick, I applied some very slow solvent (called "retarder" thinner, with a very long drying time) to soften the lacquer at the edges of the crack:

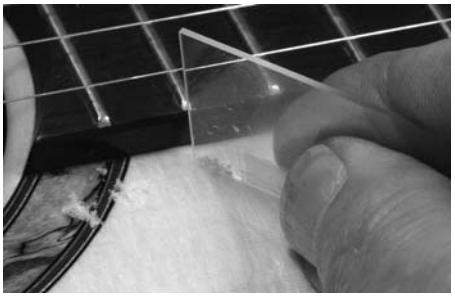
It took a full day for this slow solvent to evaporate, leaving behind a slightly swollen and softened original finish.

Then, just as in the examples above, I brushed in some nice new lacquer:



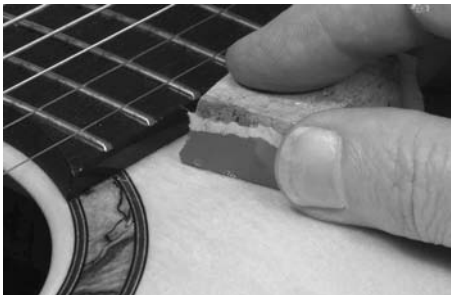
And, this time, I let the whole thing dry for about six weeks. It would have taken longer than that to get it fixed at the factory, so I figured we could all wait.

This time I chose a glass microscope slide as a scraper, and protected most of the edge with the same thin tape:



Because the fill was right up against the edge of the fingerboard I wanted to be certain to scrape accurately, and the rigidity of the glass slide helped maintain a level attack.

Block sanding with 2500 grit this time, I got a really nice level surface with hardly any sanding scratches to buff out:



And the guitar looked brand new again, ready for the showroom floor.

There are lots of techniques used in lacquer restoration, and "drop filling" is probably the most common one used for small defects. As far as I know, every maker who uses nitrocellulose lacquer does this kind of repair from time to time. In fact, I suspect that what characterizes those whose finish is considered "perfect" is the willingness to chase down and fill the tiniest defect.

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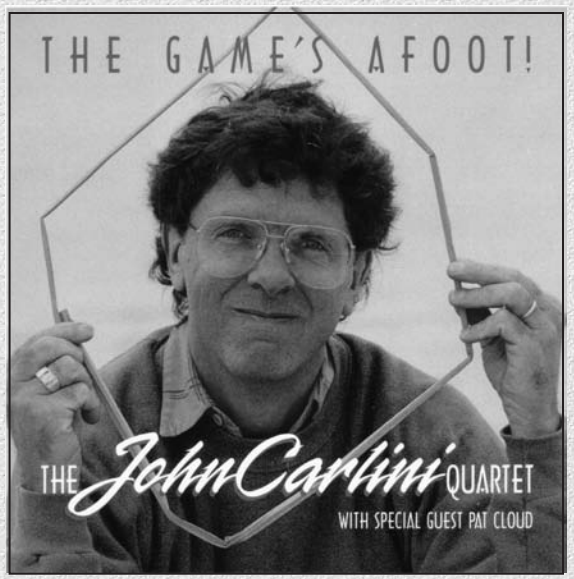

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Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Shenandoah

Hi, friends and welcome back to my corner of the magazine. I got an email from a friend of mine asking when I was gonna take a whack at "Shenandoah." Well now that the Kamps are over for 2003 I had the time to sit and think about it. Here you go. Tony Rice has a monumental version of this classic and I thought I would write out something that could get you started to learning this song.

I have written it out with two versions. The first is the basic melody and chord structure. You should not have any trouble with this version. The important point with this tune and any other tune that is this slow is sustain! You must let your notes ring out and overlap. This will make this and other slower tunes really sound slick and full.

The most difficult places in the B section are the hammer-ons and pull-offs. You must time these out perfectly as well as watching out for the right hand down-ups. Watch out and practice this one correctly and you will have a classic song up your sleeve.

Let me know what others you want to work on. Write to me at: Steve@Flatpik.com. Remember, my Flatpik is without the "C". C U

Steve K.

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Shenandoah

Arranged by Steve Kaufman

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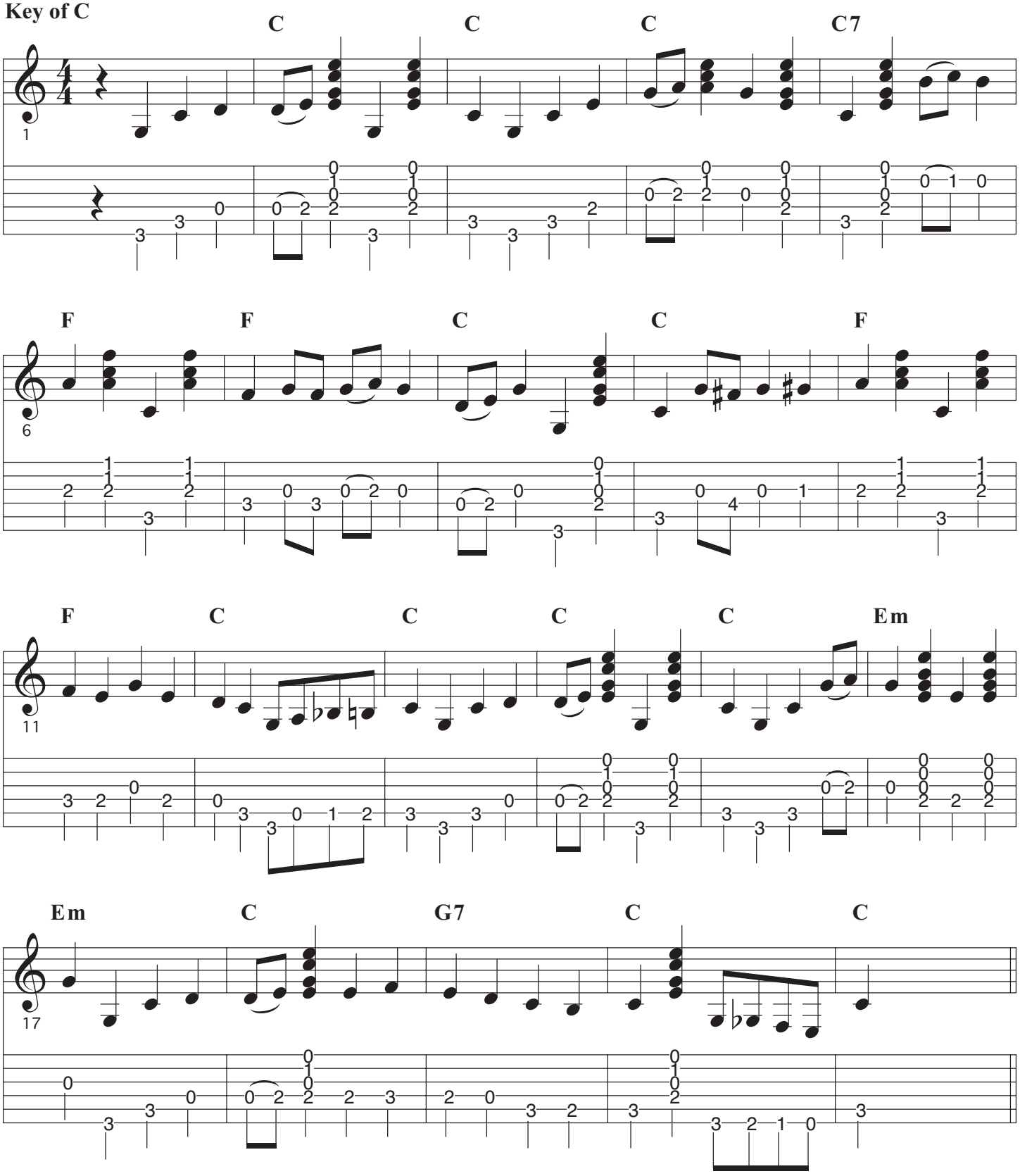
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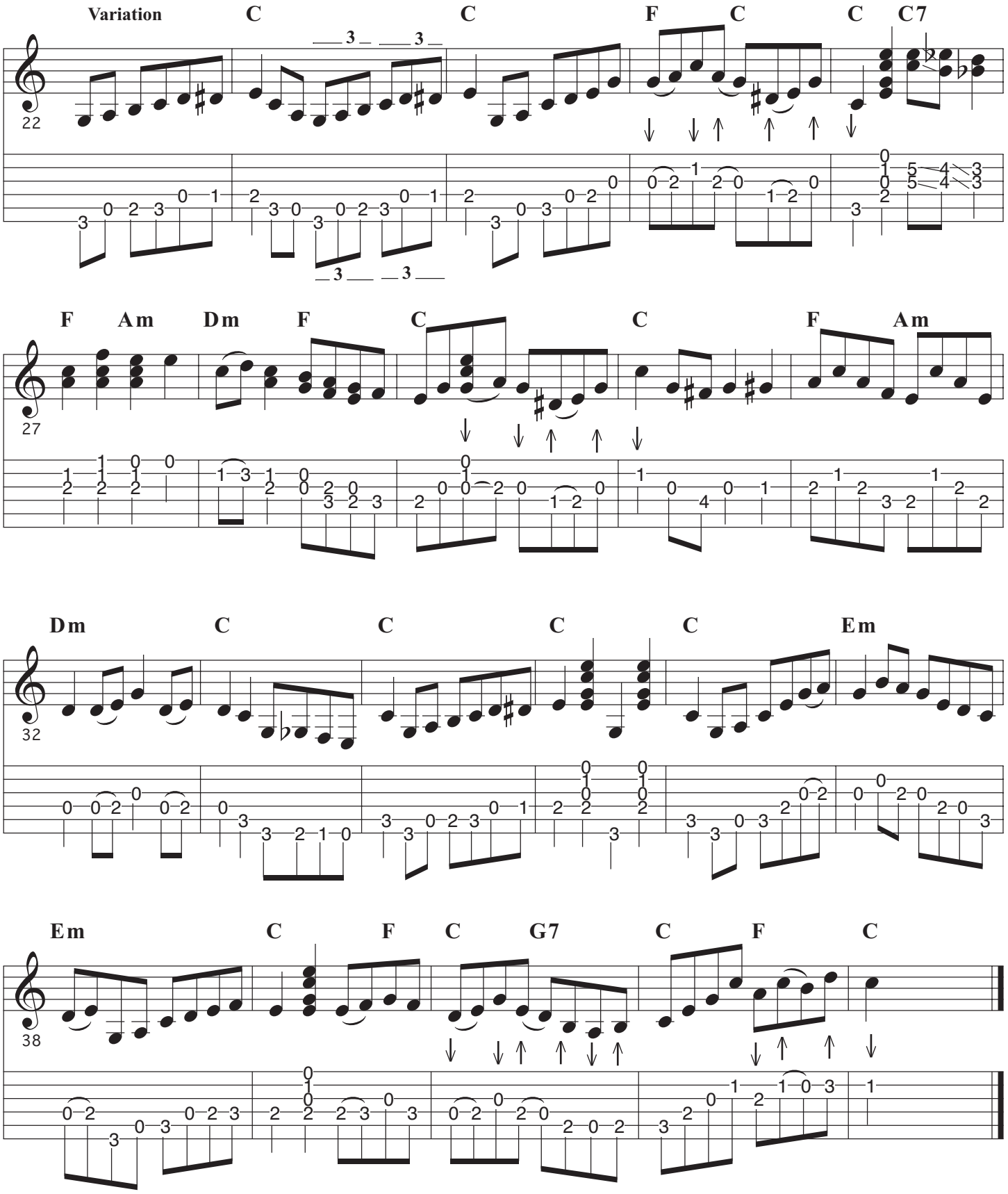
Adventures in Acoustic Music: Gypsy Jazz Style Study

by John Carlini

Gypsy music is highly specialized. It has a unique and exotic sound, but it resists analysis. When you think you have it figured out, something occurs which reminds you that you haven't figured out anything! There are times when it's better not to get bogged down with trying to understand. Listen, enjoy, and experiment!

I think that listening is the most important way to get started. We are experiencing a "renaissance" of sorts in Gypsy jazz string bands. There are plenty of recorded sources to check out these days. They are all worth listening to. But there is one source to which everyone goes, and that is, of course, the great Django Reinhardt. We are fortunate that Django and the incredible jazz violinist, Stephane Grappelli, recorded so much great music. Feel free to go for any of it! It all swings. Relentlessly!! Listen and close your eyes. Let Django and Stephane take you away on an exotic musical adventure.

Here are some comments regarding the musical example. My personal preference to playing music is what I call the "blank slate" approach. It works this way. Your practice space is the place to analyze, to figure things out, to work on improvement in all areas of music. That's a "left brain" activity. When it's time to produce music the "right brain" takes charge. I'll be discussing this in future columns. For now, I'll just say that having written the chord pattern in the example, and knowing what these chords sound like in advance (internalizing the sounds), I have no pre-plan for the notes of the solo. None. It is a "blank slate"! If I have done enough "left brain" preparation, I should be able to throw some notes (colors) up there and produce a small tonal sketch.

Is that a frightening prospect? You bet!

Now that it's done we can take a look at it. If you've been following this column for a while, the chord pattern should be familiar to you. It is a variation of our old friend from three or four columns back when the style-analysis began. Only now it is in a minor key, making it fall more naturally into the Gypsy mood (or mode!).

The first four bars turned out to be a melodic phrase which contains chord tones and passing tones from the "parent" modes of those chords. Measure 5 contains a Gypsy-like figure in which each chord tone is approached by its lower chromatic neighbor. Measures 9 and 10 get deeper into this chromatic effect. The remainder is "straight ahead" melodic-chordal material.

As always, I wish you ongoing success and enjoyment through music.

Please visit John's web site (www.johncarlini.com) for the latest performance info and acoustic music news. Check out the new CD by the John Carlini Quartet, The Game's Afoot!, featuring Don Stiernberg, Brian Glassman, and Steve Holloway, w/special guest Pat Cloud at www.fgmrecords.com

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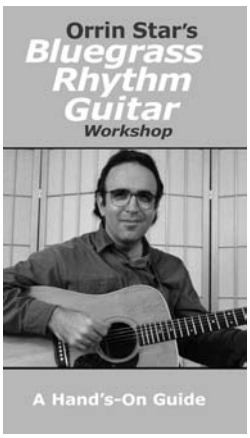
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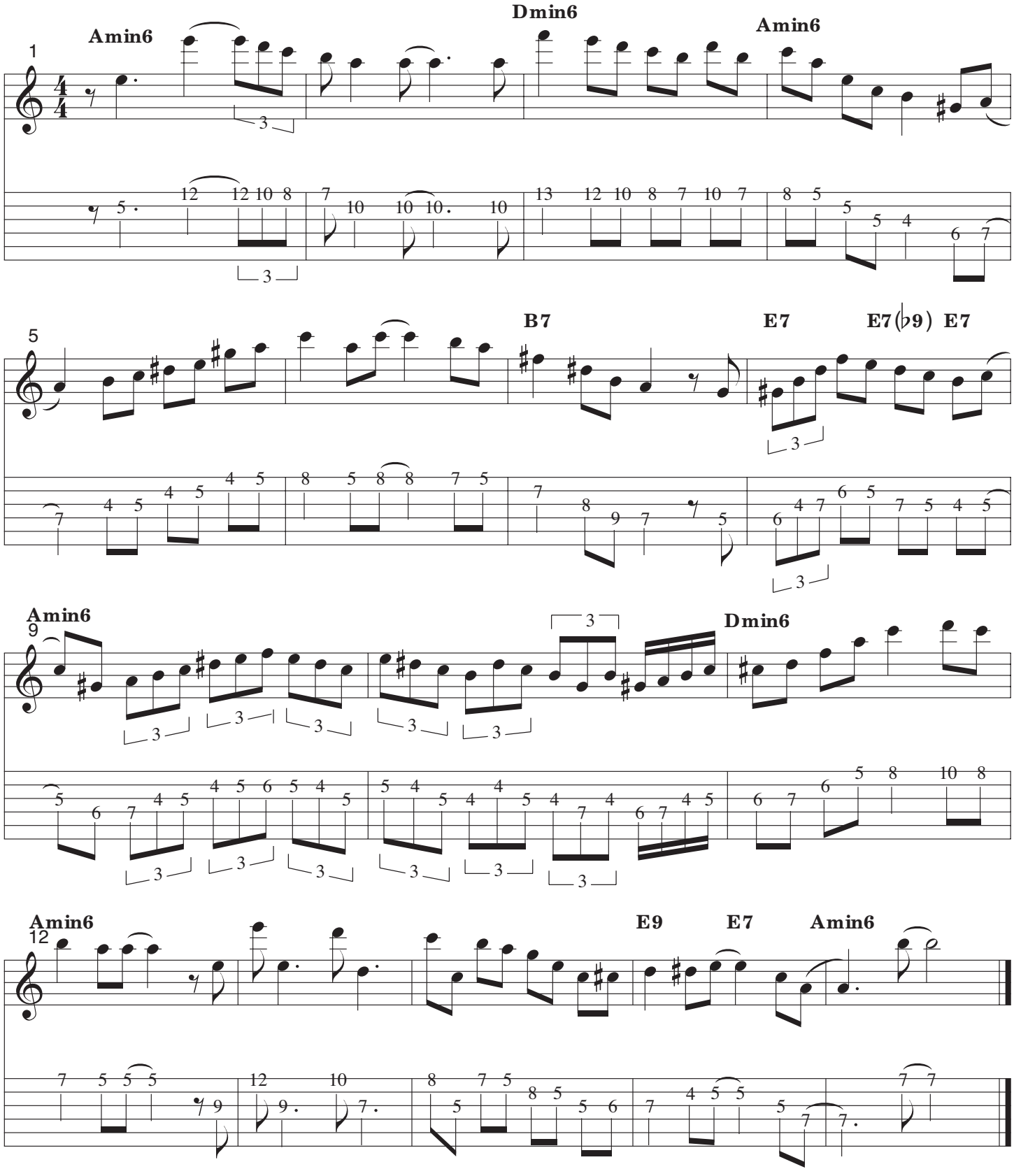

Flatpick Profile:
James Nash

by Chris Thiessen

Letting the Music Breathe

If you woke early on Saturday morning at Merlefest, you may have attended a flatpicking workshop hosted by Happy Traum. David Grier, Brad Davis, and Bryan Sutton were on stage along with James Nash (lead guitar for the Waybacks). Though perhaps as not well-known to East Coast audiences, James demonstrated conclusively that he could hold his own in that august company. Later that day he performed to an enthusiastic crowd on the Hillside Stage with the Waybacks, a California-based band that crafts several different musical styles into a music all their own.

Interested in James's ability to switch easily between traditional/bluegrass/fiddle tunes and the Waybacks music, FGM caught up with James Nash on July 3rd, just before a Waybacks concert for the city of Santa Barbara on Independence Day.

Tell us a bit about your musical background.

Music has been around the house all my life. My father, a doctor, plays mandolin, and some of my earliest musical memories are of Sunday nights in Chapel Hill, NC. Our neighborhood would hold pot luck dinners. The adults would bring instruments and play folk and bluegrass music, and all the kids would go down to the basement. When I'd hear the music coming from upstairs, I was always drawn to come up to listen and try to join in, and that love just stuck with me.

Of course, when I hit my teen years bluegrass and folk music just wasn't cool any longer. It had to be rock 'n' roll, so I picked up the electric guitar. I played electric guitar through high school and college. In fact, it was only about five years ago that I seriously started to focus on acoustic guitar. I went to a couple of festivals with my dad in Nashville, and something clicked. For some reason the acoustic guitar better fit what I wanted to say, musically. There were aspects of the electric guitar that didn't translate so well to the acoustic, but I immediately felt a closer connection with the instrument.

So your style surfaced more when you played acoustic guitar. Who do you consider your "mentors"?

Well, I'm not really a student of a particular guitarist's – or musician's – style. I've not sat down and analyzed everything Clarence White or Doc Watson or Tony Rice has done, and I've not really accumulated a vocabulary of their licks. I listen to all sorts of music, and I think I focus on how each musician phrases what they do. I'm fascinated by the phrasing of a particular musician.

When folks pick at high speeds, that's an impressive display of technical skills, sure. But that speed-picking often misses an essential element: how the music should be phrased, how it breathes from note to note. Regardless of the speed, I think that's what makes the music of our heroes so great—the feel. And for me that was the first point of differentiation—of awareness—between electric and acoustic guitar. Somehow when I switched between instruments, there was a difference in the way the notes naturally flowed or linked together. Fiddle tunes are a great example of this. Many fiddles tunes sound very similar. I've been at jams when somebody announced one tune and actually played another. I'm not saying that's bad, and sometimes the resulting mix is very interesting [laughs], but it demonstrates that each fiddle tune has its own nuances, its own phrasings, and if you lose those, suddenly you're not even playing the same tune anymore. Musicians need to be aware of those phrasings. I try to focus on the way things are said musically, and I'm always looking for the subtle differences—training my ear to those differences.

Which is why Tony, Doc, Clarence, Dan, David, or any other of a dozen excellent musicians can play the same tune and render it dramatically different.

Exactly. Just like there's a difference in the speech pattern of people – how you can recognize one person's voice from another's – music has that same quality. And that's why learning a bunch of someone else's licks doesn't necessarily mean you internalize any of the magic of what they're doing. You'd need much more than a vocabulary of licks to be

able to speak like Clarence White or Tony Rice. You might drop in a lick here or there or string together a number of licks and come up with something that sounded a bit like Clarence or Tony or Doc, but there'd be something missing—you wouldn't end up phrasing the music the way they do. Those licks are a component of their musical accent, not the other way around. And that musical accent can be tremendously powerful. Look at Django Reinhardt. When I first heard him, I was completely floored, and I had the urge to run out and buy everything he'd done. I was totally fixated by how he played, how he moved from one musical phrase to another. Django is one of those towering giants of music—you listen to him for thirty seconds and you've already been forever influenced by him. But when I have an urge like that to sit down and blindly try to copy someone else's style… that's when I need a good slap in the face [laughs]. Now, since I have students, they'll ask me to teach them, say, a Tony Rice tune. I'll learn it from the recording, note by note, and give it back to them. But I also ask them to think about why Tony may have done this tune this way. I'm trying to get them to listen past the lick vocabulary and look at the sprit of the music, to recognize the genius of phrasing that Tony has. I mean, he's got a transcendent style. His licks rise out of the way he feels the music. And that's the same with all great musicians: at some point they rise above the licks, the vocabulary of the music, and they start speaking.

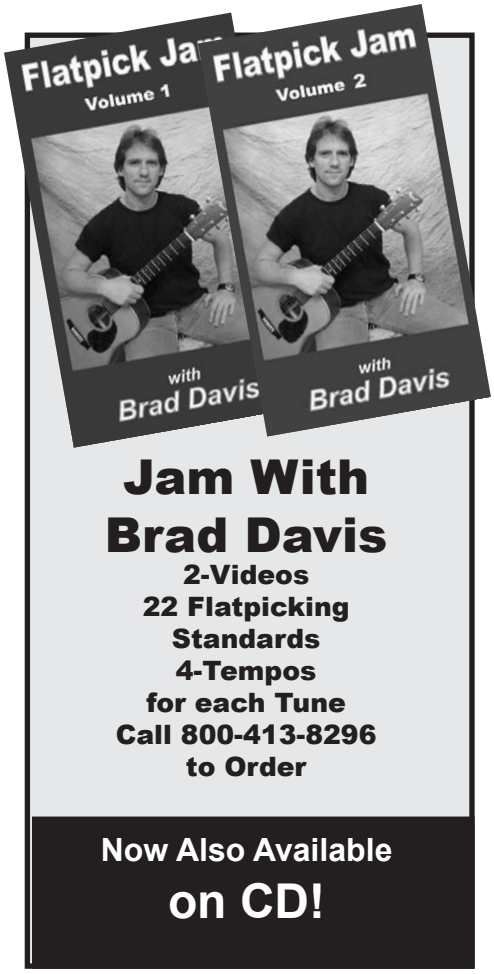
So where does practice come into this? Do you practice all the time?

Well, I don't practice—with focus—as much as I'd like to. I play a lot, and I try to work out sounds in my head when I'm away from the instrument. Not practicing scales or licks, but trying somehow to get to the phrasing of what I believe music should sound like. And when I'm playing the instrument, I really try to listen. Even when I'm doing something very mechanical like playing scales, I'm trying to listen to the sounds, to how the notes go together. Essentially I'm doing ear training, trying to internalize the music as much as I can.

You mentioned earlier that you have students. How do you try and move them from the lick-based mechanical music to this organic, sound-and-phrase-based music?

With students, I guess my primary goal is developing their improvisational skills. And how we improvise, unfortunately, is a great mystery. Once a student can play a tune like "Fisher's Hornpipe," I'll ask them to "make it better." That may seem arrogant, but we'll start playing with variations on the tune, changing a note here or there, and they may start to see that the version they've learned from me is not carved in stone. It can change, and they have the ability – and the musical right – to change it. Consider the musical giants of the past, like Bach. We hear his music now in a historical context, and it's easy to forget entirely that he was a radical improviser in his day—the guy loved to jam! He was playing around with a lot of ideas, and much of his best-known work began as improvisation that later he wrote down. So we have what he wrote down and that's "Bach's style." I think he'd probably laugh to look now at our image of what he did, at how we've restricted his range of musical skills to only that which is written on paper.

Speaking of writing, you typically write three or four tunes per CD. How does the mix of lyric and tune come together?



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Ah, it's the age-old question: which comes first, the lyric or the tune. Or maybe it's the title [laughs]. We've got a tune called "Monkey Pants" on *Way Live*. It was suffering from the "what do you call it" instrumental dilemma when [Waybacks bassist] Joe read a newspaper article about this guy who tried to come through customs from Indonesia smuggling several exotic birds under his shirt. He was pulled aside because his shirt was moving! When the customs inspectors asked him if he had anything else he wanted to declare, he told them he had monkeys in his pants. And he did—two of them! It was a great story, so we titled the tune "Monkey Pants," for no particular reason. But we've had folks come up to us at shows telling us that tune couldn't be named anything else: it just sounded like monkey pants. Sometimes things just come together, and you don't have to understand it.

For a long time I was paralyzed by the sheer simplicity of the three-chord tune, and how I could even think I could get something new out of that. And I still think it's actually easier to write a complex tune with eleven chord changes and different timings. But the challenge is the simple tune. Most of the songs or tunes I write grow over time. Like everyone, I'm inspired by lots of things, and I just let those inspirations work on me—sometimes they turn into complete songs, and most of the time they don't. And sometimes when I'm not thinking about it, tunes just start to work themselves out—at times like that, the tune is telling me, "Stop everything you're doing and pay attention to me!" Who knows where that voice comes from, but you'd better listen to it—inspiration vanishes as quickly as it comes.

So you've got music running in your head all the time? What do you do to "clear" your head?

I perform a lot, which can be very cleansing, but sometimes I just need to set the guitar aside for a while. Unfortunately, there's a level of technical expertise that comes only from constant playing, and life has a funny way of intruding on that [laughs]. I get frustrated when my technical skills lag behind what I want to say musically—sometimes I think I have a great idea in my head, but the fingers just can't keep up. But regardless of how good my technique feels that day, lately, especially when I'm playing on stage, I've tried to focus on the phrasing of the music, on how the notes link together and how the phrases relate one to the next. That's what I'm talking about with music "breathing."

As part of building that awareness, I listen to tapes we [the Waybacks] make of our shows. I also encourage my students to record their own playing—I've improved so much by hearing myself on playback. When I first started getting serious about performing, I was often puzzled by the way the crowd responded to my playing: some nights I'd think on stage that I was really off, and the crowd would love whatever I was doing. Other nights I'd think I was really on, and I'd get a lukewarm response. Taping helped me try to sort that out. But that's not to say that I've necessarily gotten any better at judging my own playing in the moment—more often than not, I'm surprised when I hear myself played back. I've found that when my focus is on making music, I simply can't listen and judge reliably. The way music feels to me when I'm playing it is often surprisingly different from the way it sounds to me when I'm listening back to it. In the studio, this is particularly clear—over time I've learned to stop making the mistake of saying "Yeah, that was the keeper," or anything like that… more often than not, I'm dead wrong. When I'm playing, I'm not absorbing the music.

Another way I get "refreshed" from playing is to play another instrument (like mandolin), or play electric guitar (like with Lane and the Badass Chicken Bones), or even just play another acoustic guitar. Sometimes that works. Shifting to something new can be very inspiring. But I'm always amazed by musicians who play the same way, regardless of instrument. I can't do that; I'm too affected by the voice of this new instrument, too aware of its possibilities.

I noticed at the Merlefest workshop that you were the odd-man-out with a non-D-sized guitar.

Yes. My main guitar is a 1990 Santa Cruz OM. I find the 000-size more comfortable, and I like the clarity and responsiveness of the smaller body. I've got a D-sized Collings, a great-sounding dreadnought, and I enjoy using it when I need that deep voice. But I find myself returning to the OM size. And I may have a new Collings OM on my doorstep when I get home! My Santa Cruz has a Sitka top, and Collings is sending me one with an Adirondack top. There's a lot of talk about how this wood is "better" than that wood, but I think it's more a matter of trying to match an instrument to a particular playing style. My Santa Cruz is a bright, aggressive guitar, which I can tone down to a sweet or pretty sound when I need to. The ability to manipulate the sound is important to me. For example, on *Burger After Church* I played a number of instruments, among them an 1896 Martin 2-27. It was a great little guitar with an incredibly sweet sound that recorded in the studio beautifully. And for its size it was surprisingly powerful, but I couldn't push it beyond what it was. For sitting around and playing quietly, a perfect guitar. But it couldn't be a stage guitar, at least not for me.

Speaking of stage guitars, your latest CD is a live album. What did you do differently for that CD?

Recording a live CD seems easy on the surface—just throw up some mics and perform a normal show—but it presented a number of new challenges for us, and required more planning than even we expected. We booked three consecutive nights at the Espresso Garden Café in San Jose, CA, a great place to play, and an intimate setting where we had had successful gigs in the past. We brought in a sound team and recorded everything we played. The hard part was to forget that we were recording, to get past the "don't screw up, now" mentality that seems to go with recording, and just do the shows. Ironically, I think it's much harder to forget you're recording when it's in front of a live audience—in the studio, knowing you can always do another take takes the pressure off. For *Way Live*, we

recorded six sets, and from that collected a full 75 minutes for the CD. We had some challenges with the stage set-up, because live I use an undersaddle pickup, I like to move around on stage, and I don't normally play into a microphone. For the *Way Live* recording, I did use an external mic, and sure I'm glad I did! The tone you hear on the record is more than 50% mic. And the in-ear monitor I use now is a great tool. It lets me keep monitor levels low, which helps control feedback and monitor bleed into stage mics, but it's also had an effect on my technique. Before the ear monitors, I worried about how my playing was heard, and when the monitor mix wasn't great, I found keeping my arms and shoulders relaxed was difficult. Now, I've got exactly what I need in my ear, I'm more relaxed, and I've heard a major improvement in my playing.

So it's all about listening and breathing?

[laughs] Yes – just like life!

For this article, James transcribes his solo on "Monkey Pants" from the Waybacks' *Way Live* CD. "'Monkey Pants' doesn't follow an obvious melody/solo structure," he explains. "Measures 1-15 contain the tune's main melody, while measures 16-31 are an improvised solo over the melody progression. I think of measures 32-43 as the chorus. Like the main melody, I play this part roughly the same way every time. Measures 44-54 are another improvised solo, this time over a different chord progression. I think of this as a bridge, and this structure—like much of 'Monkey Pants'–owes a debt to bebop standards like 'Scrapple from the Apple' where, instead of having a written melody as a bridge, the bridge is a chord progression to 'blow' over. Finally, measures 55-60 restate the main theme, with a bit of embellishment to punctuate the ending. Readers might have fun playing the tune the way I do: play measures 1-15 and 32-43 as written, but treat the other sections as chord progressions to jam over. Have fun!"

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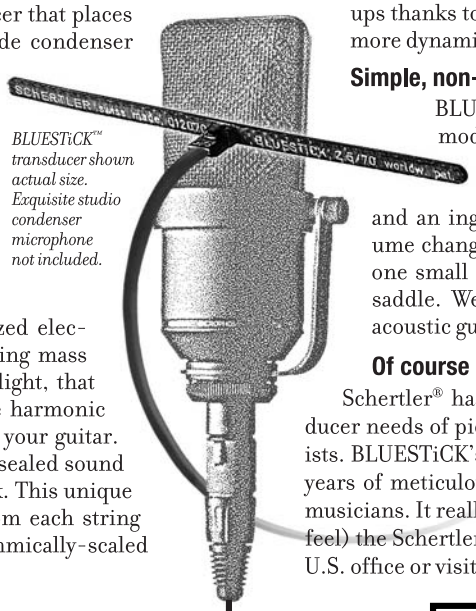

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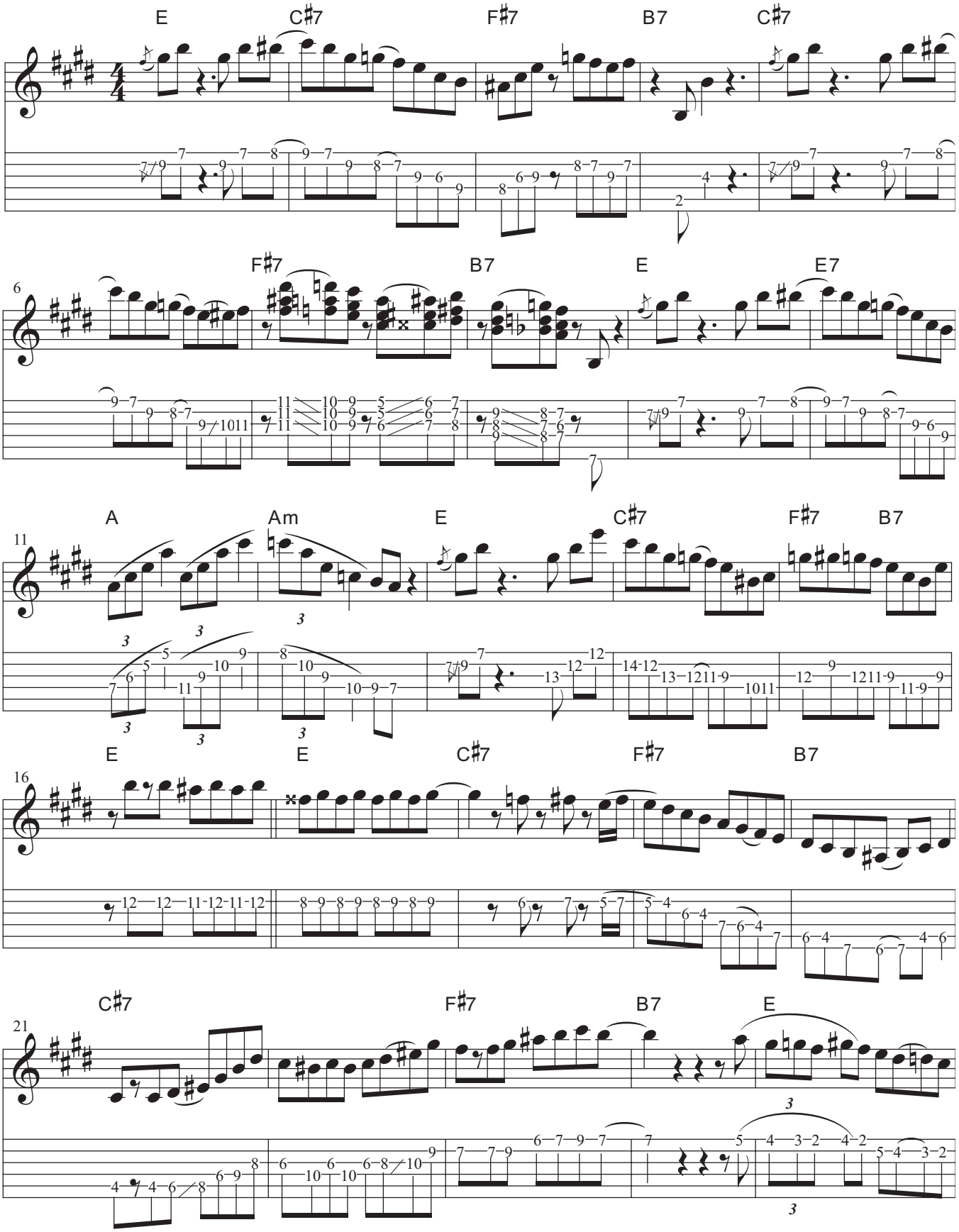
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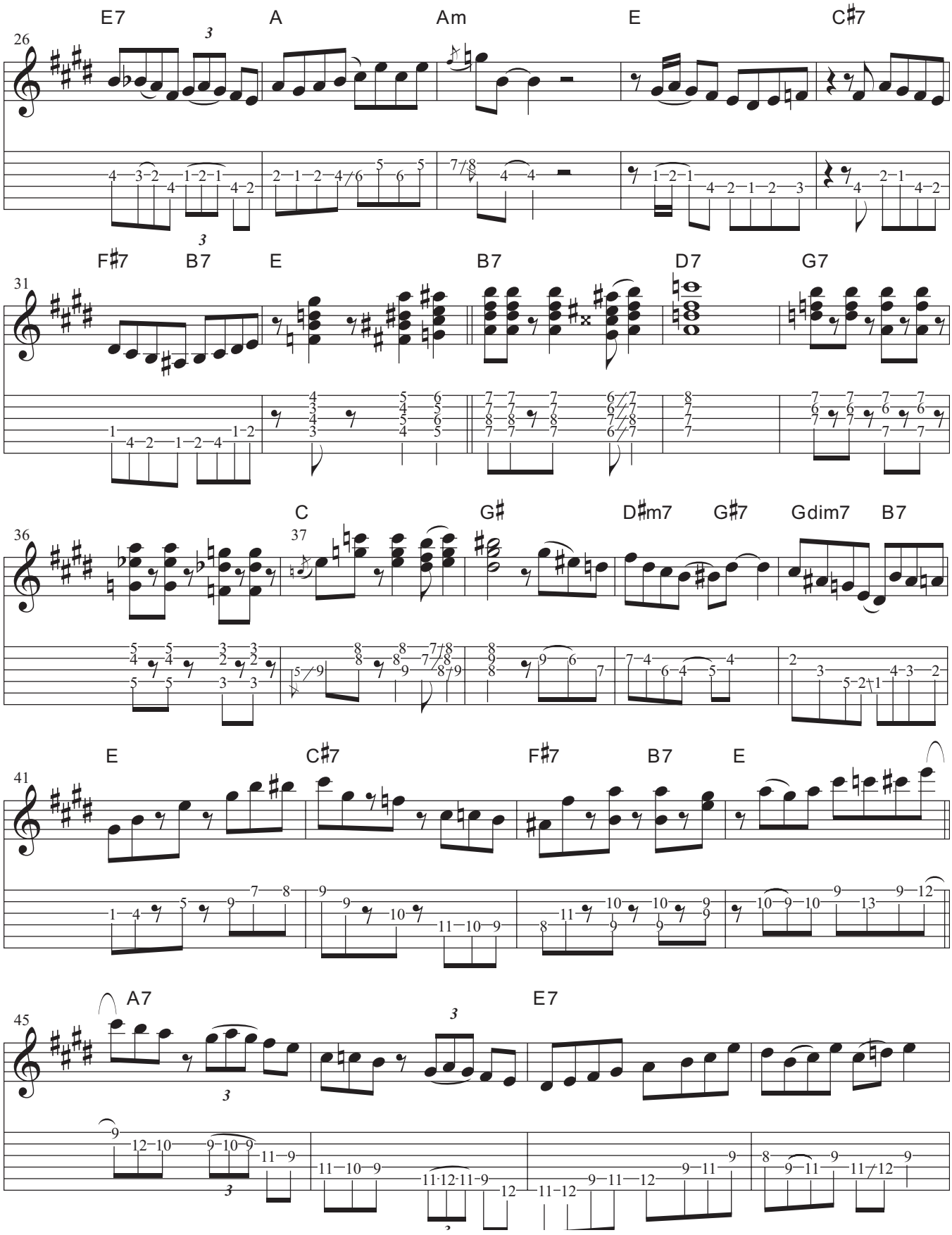
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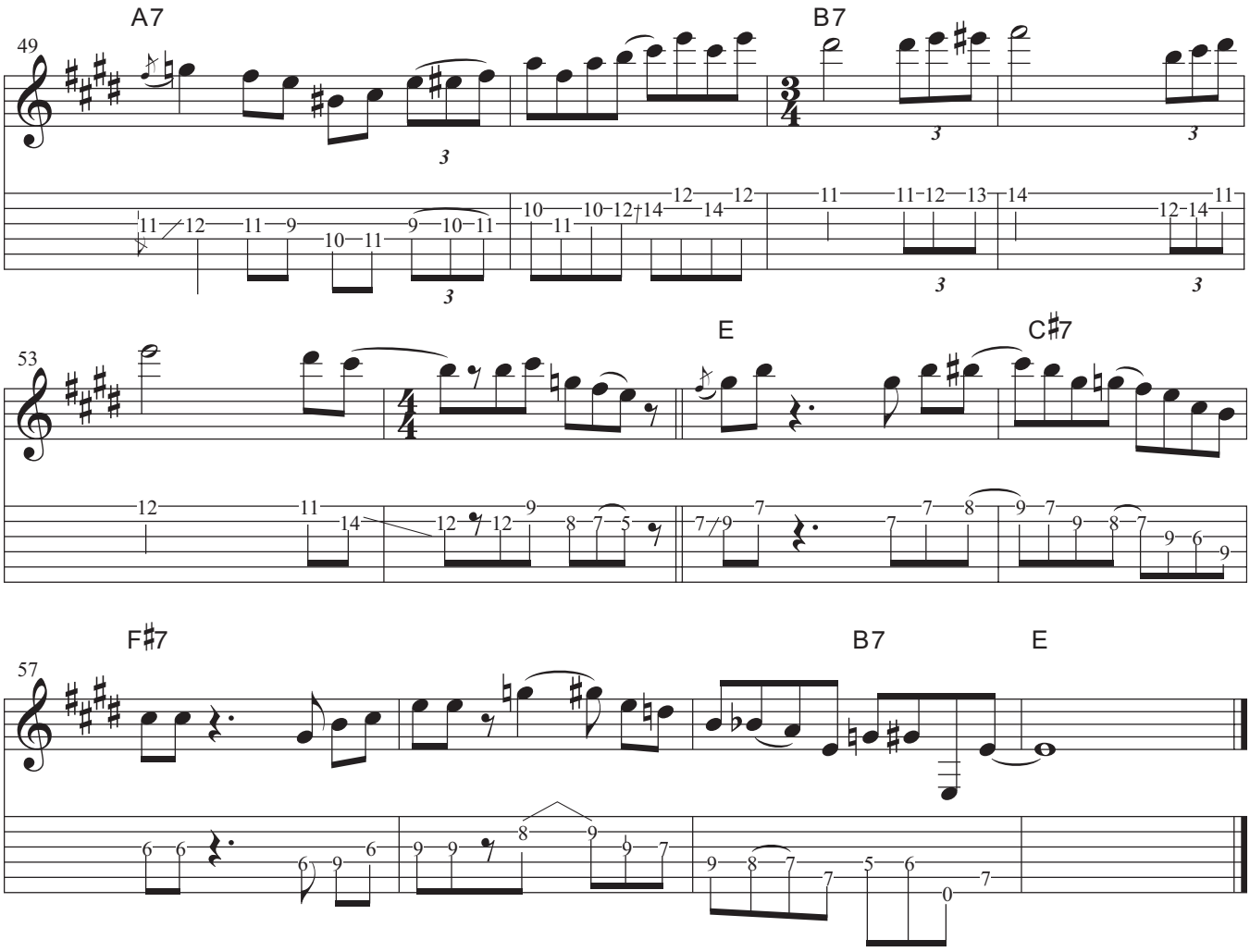
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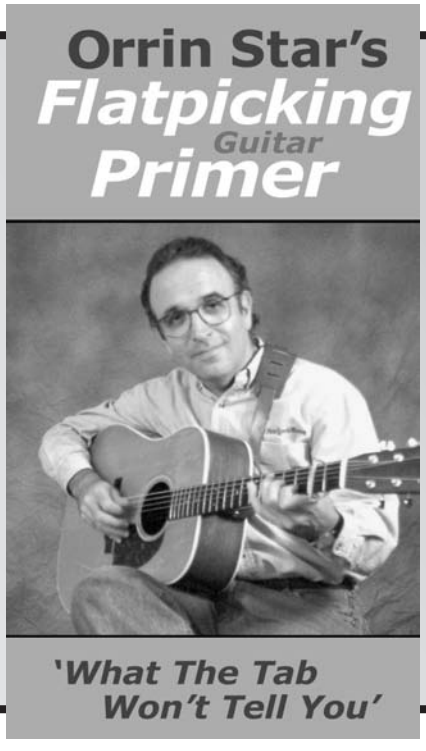


Lawrence Smart Guitars

by Chris Thiessen

From the windows of his one-person workshop, Lawrence Smart can see the mountains that he's used as inspiration for the headstock profile on his distinctive "Quartet" mandolins. Less than a quarter-mile away from the shop's back door is an excellent catch-and-release stream teeming with cutthroat and rainbow trout. Nestled near McCall in the remote forests of west central Idaho, Lawrence Smart has managed to establish and build a quiet reputation as one of America's handful of premier luthiers.

Smart guitars and mandolins (and mandolas and mandocellos) have found their way into the hands of prominent acoustic artists in the United States and Europe, who universally extol the tone and quality of his instruments. Smart offers five models of guitars: the Grand Concert, the J-2 (a small jumbo), the J-3 (a large jumbo), the D (a Dreadnought-size), and the Parlor. He also offers the full family of mandolin models.

"Most of my commissions begin with a conversation," says Lawrence. "That may seem pretty simplistic, but in that dialog I determine what a prospective client might want tonally and visually as well as how they intend to use the instrument. A bluegrass musician is going for a different sound than a classical musician. And I heard the phrase 'instrument of my dreams' a lot, so there is a lot of pressure on me as a craftsperson to work out as many of the construction and cosmetic details as possible beforehand. Most of my clients pretty much know what they want, so I don't have to educate them. We just talk about what they want." After almost two decades of building instruments, Lawrence feels more comfortable with this process. "When I first began, I'd occasionally direct a client to another builder because they wanted something I was not completely confident in building. [He laughs] I'll still do that, because time and practice have taught me that meeting my client's needs is the most important thing, even if I'm not the person who gets to build the instrument."

Essentially a custom luthier, Lawrence finds that many of his clients want a version of a Smart instrument they've see or played elsewhere. "My instruments are my best advertisements," he says. "I have a website [www.smart-instruments.com, managed by John Relph, a Smart client], and I've made presentations to the Guild of American Luthiers and attended IBMA, but my instruments generate the interest. And lots of times people play one of my guitars or a mandolin and call me based on how the instrument felt. They describe it as a combination of tonal qualities, appearance, and the weight and feel of the instrument in their hands."

The "feel" of a Smart instrument is no accident. It's part of Lawrence's long-term relationship with intensive hand-building. "I don't have a CNC," he says, "but only because I don't want to take the time to learn how to use it. Certainly it takes me more time to build, and I use some power tools to simplify my life. I'll use a router pantograph for carving, or a drill press to hog out the top and back of a mandolin, or power sanders to dimension the thickness of a guitar top or back. But there's a lot of personal satisfaction in taking the wood through the process of building. It's kind of a 'journey is the reward' idea. I really like working with wood, and respect its uniqueness and inherent imperfections. Each piece of wood presents its own challenges; that's what keeps me interested."

As much as Lawrence has perfected his building skills, he believes that absolute perfection is not the ultimate goal in creating instruments. "I know that I'm really building a tool someone else will use to accomplish their artistic vision. Whatever artistic or aesthetic considerations I have must be transparent to the will of the person using the tool. If I don't create a good tool, I've not accomplished what my client wants. So my 'perfection' has to be first the tonal aspects and visual aesthetics my client wants, followed by my vision as a luthier. I'm often reminded of the difference between the fabled Italian violins of the 1700s and their German counterparts. The German instruments were flawless in appearance and workmanship. Their Italian counterparts were often not so perfect, but had greater musical 'soul.' That's what I'm striving for."

"Basically, all these instruments are just wood joined together with glue. But I've not met a luthier who does not put a lot of sweat and toil into his or her instruments. That's where an instrument's characteristics come from, and sometimes absolute perfection takes a back seat to sound. I remember attending a craftmans' convention a few years back, and being surrounded by literally hundreds of gorgeous and meticulously crafted guitars. Maybe it was just me that day, but I found that abundance of absolute perfection very sterile. Wood is idiosyncratic, and the challenge of working with wood is continually rediscovering the compromise that must occur between instrument design, client desire, and your skills as a luthier."

Smart's clients typically select from the standard set of woods for their instruments. As Lawrence interviews his clients and clarifies their acoustic desires, he's able to suggest specific woods to meet those desires.

"For guitars, most folks choose rosewood--either Brazilian or Indian--for backs and sides, but other rosewoods and rosewood-like woods are gaining acceptance. Koa, mahogany, and maple are excellent woods, depending on the sound you want. I've heard some really nice cherry guitars, and have used walnut on a few guitars. I also have some black locust in my wood stock, which is a very ugly wood, but is tonally similar to rosewood."

When asked about the diminishing resources of "standard" guitar woods, Lawrence answers quickly. "I don't think luthiers need to shoulder most of the blame for depletion. Based on what I'm seeing, most luthiers will be doing okay with the current 'traditional' wood sets for the next few decades. But it's very wise to start looking around now for alternatives." Ironically, some of what clients want is driven by luthiers themselves. "I remember when spruce was not worth anything unless it was perfect in appearance. Everyone saw figured spruce as defective. But Dana Bourgeois has done a great job of educating folks about the acoustical properties of figured spruce. Figure interrupts the grain in wood and stiffens a particular part of the top. (On the other hand, silk—medullary rays—is not a figure, but an indication of perfectly quartersawn spruce.) In my experience, bearclaw spruce is stiffer and has a very interesting tonal quality. Figures like bearclaw seem to naturally channel sound, in much the same way as braces applied to the underside of the top. Figured topwoods have acoustical qualities that we're only discovering. It's similar to the tonal differences between using flame maple and quilted maple for mandolin backs. There is a tonal difference, especially when combined with Englemann or Adirondack spruce. Again, a luthier has to know and select from the palette of tone woods to produce a specific acoustical effect."

To further his personal tone wood palette, Lawrence has driven several thousand miles searching the forests of Idaho for quality spruce. "In addition to driving to various jobbers to get woods, I've also driven throughout Idaho to find downed spruce trees. I won't cut live trees, but I have been lucky enough to find sufficient high-quality spruce in trees felled by age or storms." So does he then hit the trees with a mallet, listening to the resonance? Lawrence laughs,

"Unfortunately, I can't tell what kind of tone wood a tree's going to provide until I split the wood and examine it. Age – or the size of the tree – is always a consideration. But then you need a clear and untwisted trunk free of branches to get straight grain that doesn't have runout, the subtle twisting of grain that occurs as a tree grows and responds to its environment."

Lawrence's construction process reflects his intensive hands-on approach. He builds in small, four-and-five instrument lots. "It's certainly not a mass production line, and as I move from one instrument to the next, I'm adjusting my luthier skills and really focusing on each instrument as a unique challenge. Right now mandolins are hot, so I'm building more mandolins than guitars, but I'm still building F-styles and A-styles in the same small instrument 'litter,'" he says.

When asked about experimenting with different designs or woods, Lawrence answers, "Keep in mind that I'm a custom builder, so I build based on commissions. But occasionally I'll build an instrument – like the 'Comet' mandolin—that extends the design envelope. The Idaho Quartet (a mandolin family project commissioned by the State of Idaho in 1995) was another project like that." [Editor's note: Smart's Comet mandolin was an arched top A model with one comet-shaped soundhole on the treble side. See his website for pictures.] "Essentially, my client has to be willing to take a risk, so it becomes a creative adventure for us both. I have a number of ideas that might be very interesting. I've not had a commission to build an archtop guitar, but some folks have been talking to me about that. I think that would be a very challenging project, adjusting a top plate that size to my expectations of tonal response."

Asked about expansion, Lawrence remarks, "I'm basically a one-person shop, because I like the amount of hands-on work. Until 1986, when I became a full-time luthier, I had been a high school teacher. From 1986-1988 I did a lot of repair work, whatever it took to keep going. Although most of my business now is building, I do some repair work because I still enjoy it. Anyway, I did have an apprentice for about three years. This guy called me up and continued calling me until I told him to come out to Idaho and really see what this business was all about. He stayed with me for three years, and is now back in Burlington [VT] building violins. He didn't have a background in woodworking and didn't bring a lot of woodworking skills to the workbench, but he was enthusiastic and he was willing to listen and do whatever was necessary to progress. He was a musician with a good ear and a desire to do the work. But I've not had an apprentice since then. So that provides me with more hands-on work. Right now I've got a two-to-three year backlog of commissions, and that's comfortable for me. I'm not sure I'd be comfortable with a longer backlog. I might focus on getting the instruments out instead of getting them right. And I want to get them right. But I am encouraged by the number of small-shop luthiers who are making a living at this business."

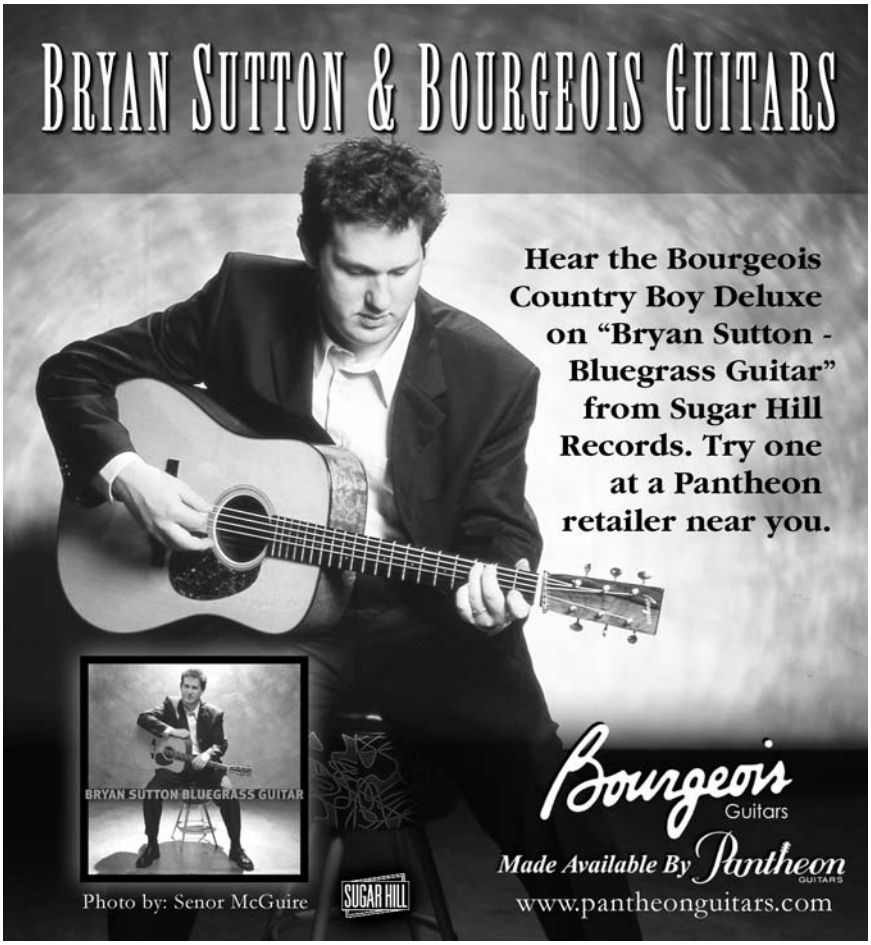
As a testament to the quality of his instruments, many of Smart's clients have commissioned more than one instrument. "As I said, my business is to fulfill a musician's dream. And dreams change over time. I've built parlor guitars for folks who originally purchased a D-sized instrument, and built A-model and F-model mandolins. Since some clients want an instrument similar to one they've played, I can go back to my 5x7 card file and look up the specifications for that instrument. One side of the card has all the client specifications and notes from our conversations. The other side contains any construction notes or observations I felt important during the building process, like how I may have voiced the braces or peculiarities of the wood and resulting tone nuances. It's not a complex system, but it works for me. And it helps me remember how particular combinations of ideas

worked."

"Since lots of my clients continue to keep in touch after they receive their instruments, I may also include notes on how those instruments have matured over time. Although pretty subjective, it's another feedback mechanism that keeps me connected to the instruments even though I don't have them in my shop. I remember one mandolinist remarking how his instrument seemed to have sonically matured over the entire length of the fretboard. Of course, he played over the entire fretboard. He'd play somebody else's mandolin and feel it was lacking in that full-fretboard maturity. I think that has more to do with the musician playing the instrument, and the instrument essentially learning. That may sound like some kind of new age philosophy, but it reinforces to me the symbiotic relationship between the instrument and the musician. Keeping those notes and observations—as subjective as they may be—is another aid to help me improve my skills."

So, what's next for Lawrence? "Each instrument, each day, I try to look at how and why I'm doing what I'm doing. I consider the design, the tone, the physics of the instrument, the efficiency of my work techniques, and what I might learn from simply talking with other luthiers who are looking at the same things. As a one-person shop, I have a lot of hands-on wood time, and that's the most important aspect of building for me. I can't see myself as head of a huge shop, where I do all the paperwork and very little of building. That's not at all the business I wanted to do, or want to do. I like woodworking. As to increasing the amount of machinery, I'll do that as an opportunity presents itself, but for me, for where I am and the instruments I build, I need to keep the hands-on, hand-built vibe. I think that's why my clients come to me. The process of building, the journey of taking wood and shaping it and moving into a sound-producing instrument is a great reward for me. Living out here in Idaho and getting to enjoy the lifestyle I have makes me pretty happy."

Judging from the ever-increasing number of Smart instrument owners (as well as repeat business), it looks like Lawrence Smart is focusing on just the right stuff. For further information about Lawrence, go to his website [www.smart-instruments.com].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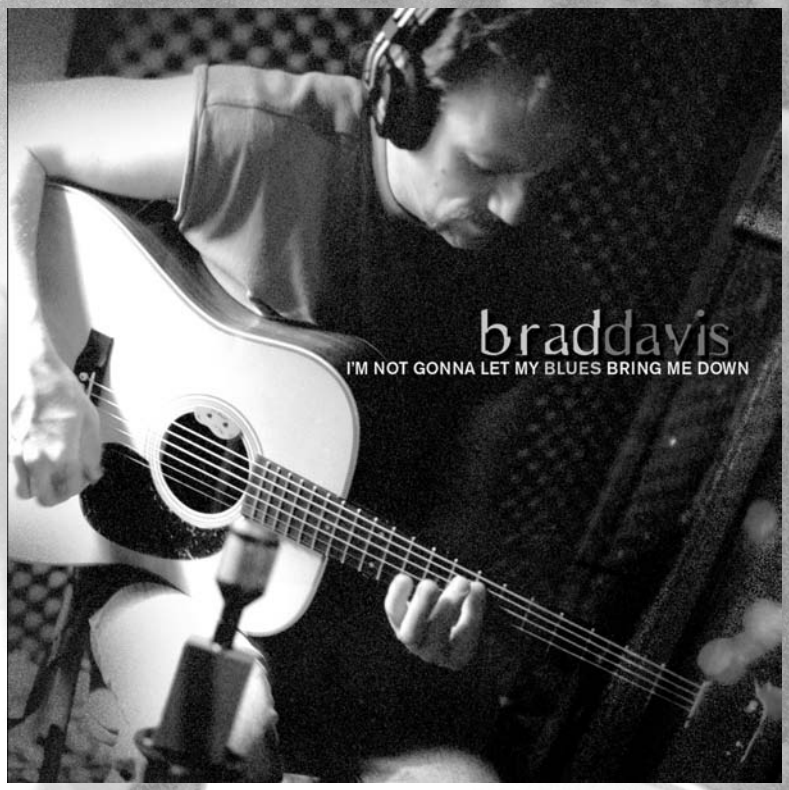

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The Solo Flatpicker

by Dan Crary

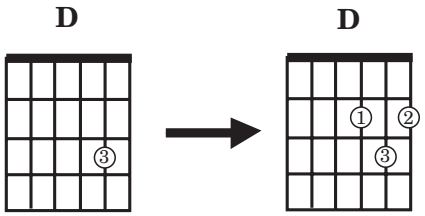
Things To Do In D

Not an elegant title, mind you, but it has promise: every key and shape and position on the guitar has "stuff" that you know how to do in that key, stuff that represents a sort of arsenal of "ammunition" for you to fire off in the middle of an arrangement or performance or jam or improvisation.

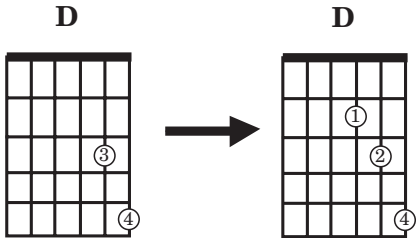
But realize this, my friends: I sorta' hate to teach this stuff by tablature, because virtually everybody I know who learns things by tab is more hamstrung by it than helped. The problem seems to be that we think of the information as something on a page… but no, no, it's not on the page, it's on the guitar and the way to memorize it is as something you feel in your hands. I promise you this is a valuable point. So use the tab to show you where stuff is, but then, as quickly as you can, memorize anything you like, and start thinking of this material as moves to make with your hands, not just more tab to hold you back.

Today, I love D, but it took me a while to see the possibilities when I was a young player. What turned it around for me was the discovery that tuning the sixth string down one full step to a low D makes this key one of the great open-string keys on the guitar. With the low D on the sixth, you have a rock-solid, piano-like bass foundation for the chord. This also sets up some great bass runs that are high in fun- and macho-quotients. A few of these are listed in sections 1-4. These runs can be intros, between-chord runs, between-phrase punctuations of a song, or inserts in an arrangement of a tune.

Then, under the heading of "Try Doing Standard Things a Little Differently in Order to Discover Some Variations That Might Be Worth Keeping," #5 is the standard accompaniment lick of church lick + alternate bass note hammered onto C natural, only we "relax" the chord by raising up the first and second fingers on "two"so that it's:



Then, on "four" we go back to the standard fingering of the D chord. The resulting measure has a kind of back-and-forth or "walking" effect that works pretty well fast, but especially pretty at a slow or moderate pace. #6 does the same thing, but with the D chord fingered as:



#7 is a cross-picking lick that is especially useful between phrases of a song, or as a substitute for a passage of chord strums, or maybe as a substitution in a tune improv. The tab gives you the basics, but again, the way to deal with this is to memorize it, play the down strokes a bit harder, and try to get it automatic and familiar. For a more complete discussion of getting familiar with a crosspicking lick, see our earlier column on the subject earlier this year [Vol7, No4, May/June 2003].

#8 and #9 are both chord licks which exploit the characteristic of this key. You can play all the chords in the key on the first three strings, while using the open bass strings as the roots of the chords. The tab here is very simple just to give you the idea, it's meant to send you off in the direction of fooling with these chords yourself, syncopating, substituting, etc., you know, teaching yourself how to play the guitar by taking a basic idea and messing with it until it becomes music.

And #10 is a rip-off of a Newgrass Revival chord lick I particularly like. It's designed to get you from two measures of D to the IV chord of G; you substitute an "F" chord just before the "G," as per the timing indicated in the tab. It's a really bitchin' way to get to the IV chord.

One last suggestion: almost all this works in D minor, a particularly lonesome-sounding minor key, so you get to use any of these ideas, with some little adaptation in that key as well. It's a point from the by-now-repetitious-and-boring-yet-nevertheless-important Crary litany: one of the ways to teach yourself to play is to take something you know and change it or try it somewhere else. It's called extending on what you already know. No kidding, when you get in the habit of taking the known over into the unknown, you'll be surprised how far it will take you. And not least, it's the most fun you'll have on the guitar.

I know, nag, nag, nag… but trust me, it's the straight shoot.

Clarence White

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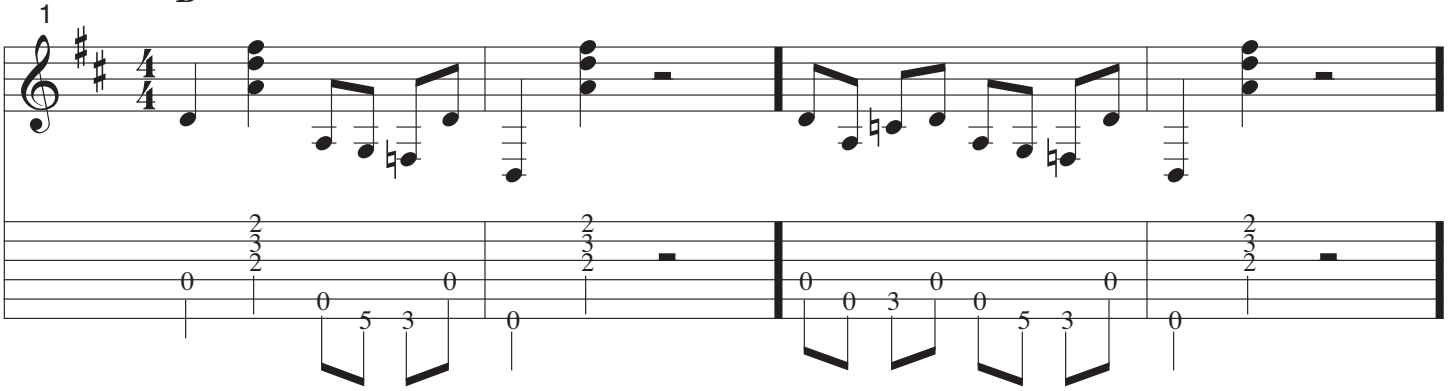
Things to Do In D

Audio CD
Tracks 20-29

Drop D Tuning

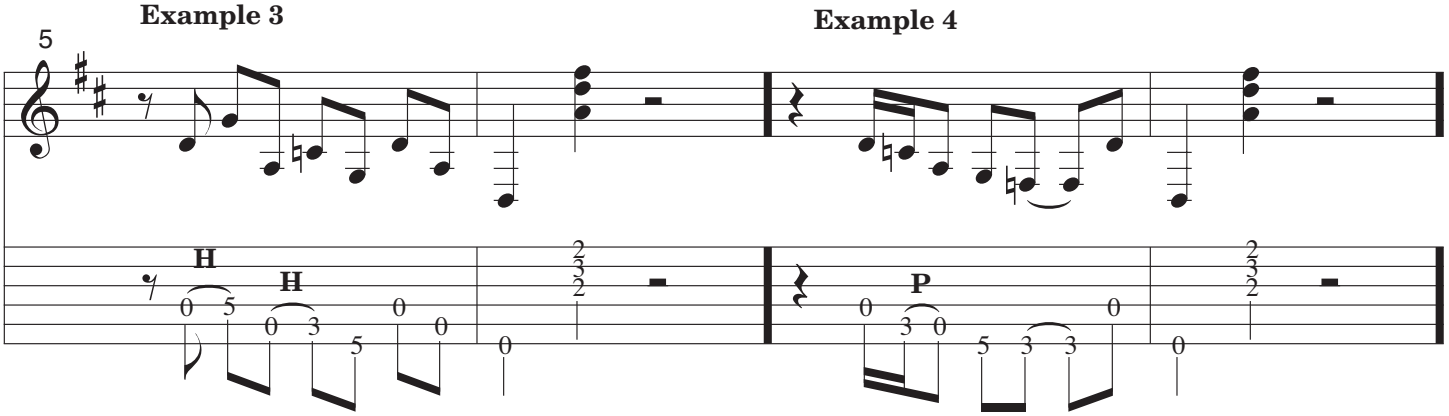
Example 1

D



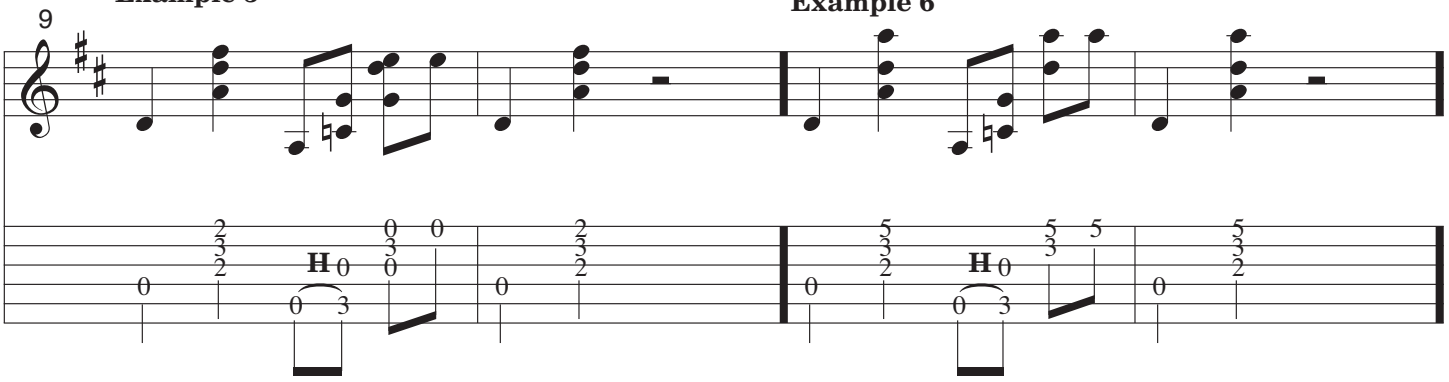
Example 2

Example 3

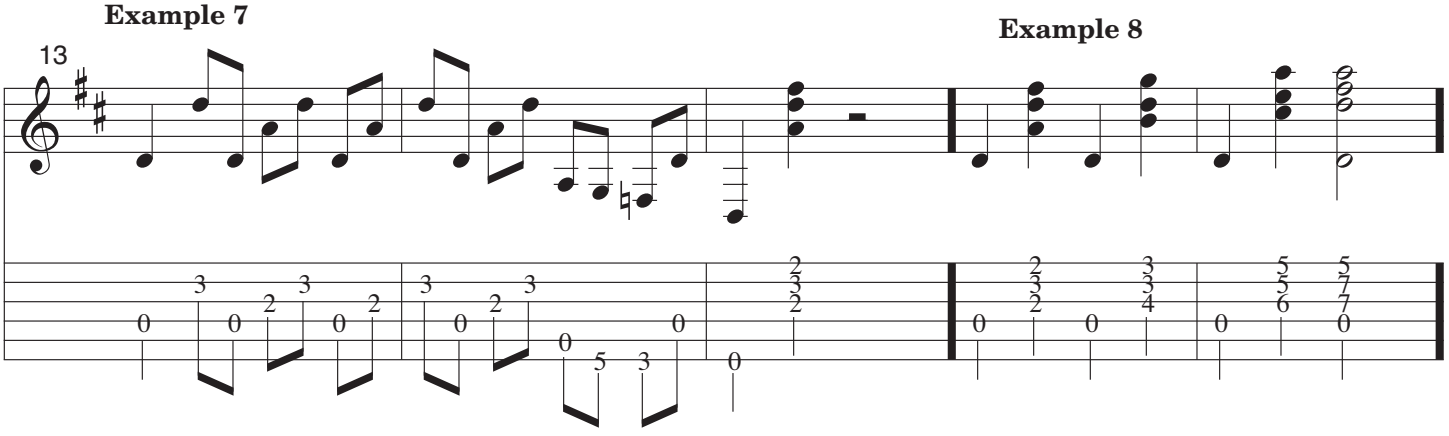


Example 4

Example 5

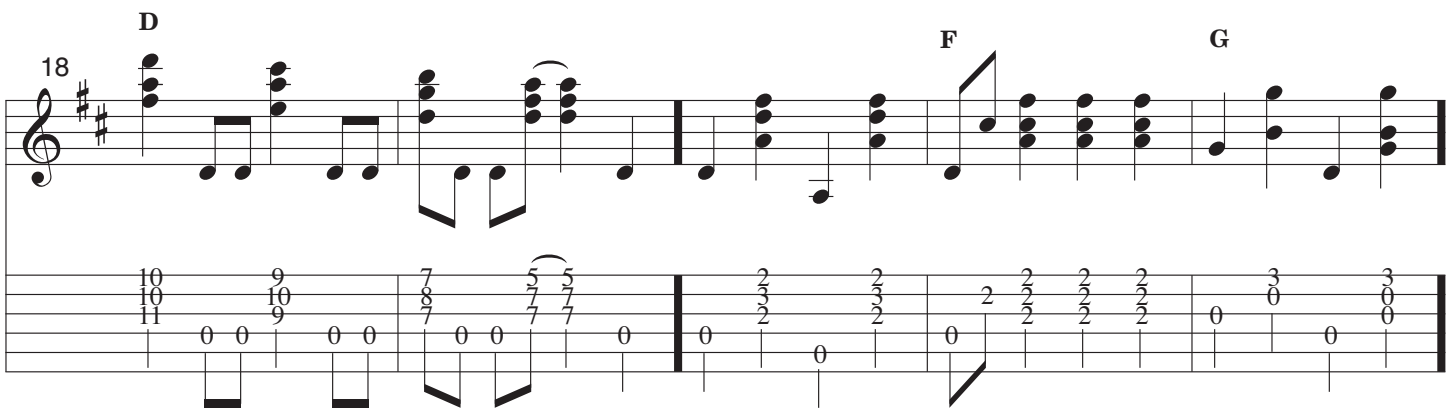


Example 6

Example 7

Example 8

Things to Do In D (con't)

Example 9

Example 10

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine pays tribute to

Doc Watson, Merle Watson & Jack Lawrence

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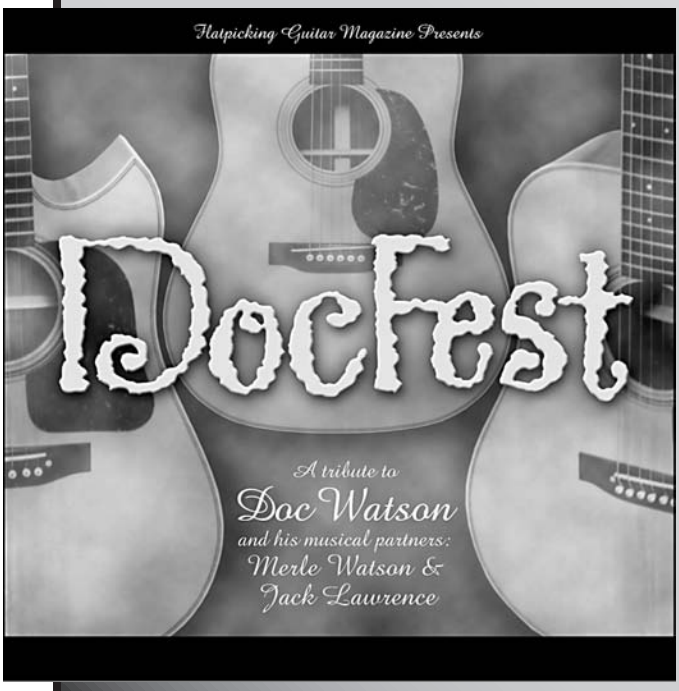
This CD includes eighteen tunes by many of today's top flatpickers. Each of the artist on this project were inspired to learn the song that they perform after first hearing the song performed by Doc Watson with one of his musical partners Merle Watson or Jack Lawrence. The CD includes Fourteen Vocals Songs and Four Instrumental Tunes as follows:



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Alternate Tuning

Roberto Dalla Vecchia "Fisher's Hornpipe"

Two issues ago we reviewed the CD *Sit Back* by Italian flatpicking Roberto Dalla Vecchia. When I got the CD in from Roberto, I had given it to reviewer Chris Thiessen without listening to it. I was visiting with Chris in Richmond and hadn't had time to listen to the disc, but I had it with me and gave it to him so I wouldn't have to mail it later. I asked that he give it a listen to see if it was something we might consider reviewing. Chris called a few days later, raved about the disc and said that he would love to write the review. He added, "You have to listen to this CD!" I asked him to send it back to me when he was finished writing the review so that I could listen to it.

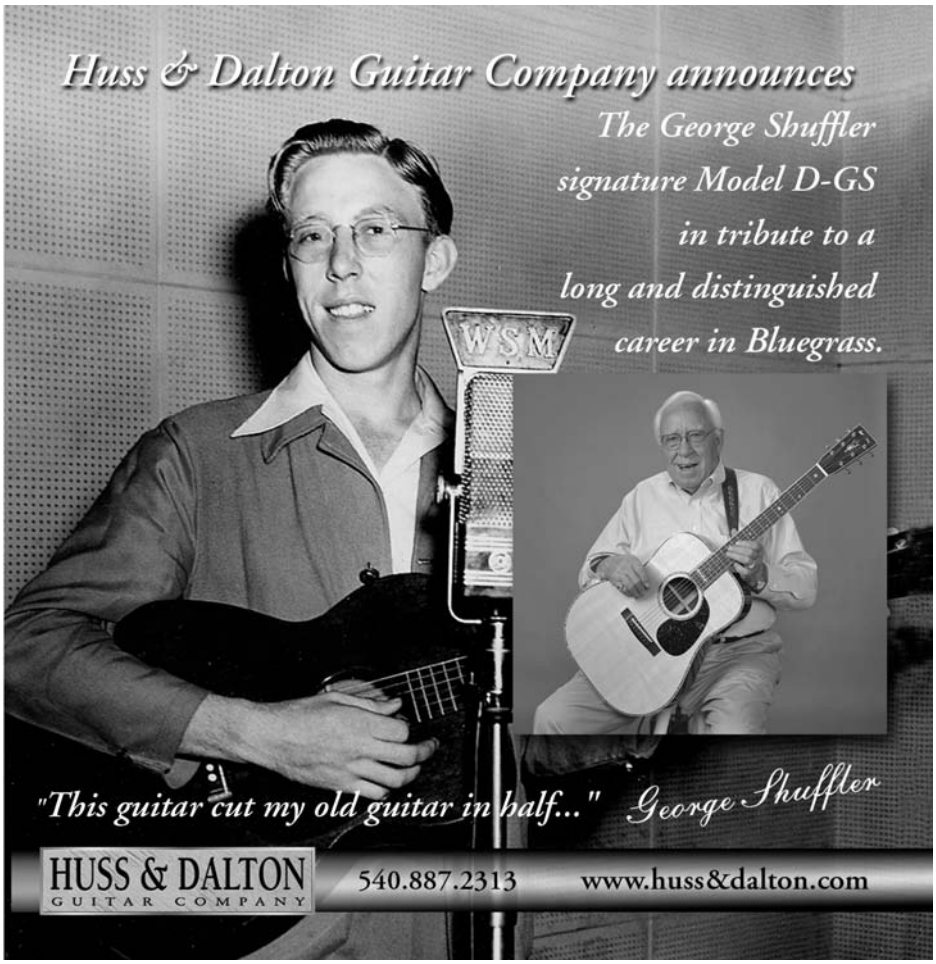
Chris gave the disc back to me a few weeks later when Brad Davis and I were in Richmond to perform a few shows at local record stores in support of Brad's new CD. Chris came to one of the shows and gave me Roberto's disc. Roberto had since contacted me and said that he would be attending Kaufman's camp and would like to meet me there. The impending meeting inspired me to put the disc in the CD player in my car as I was on my way to camp. I was blown away by what I heard.

The music on this disc is amazing. It is not your "standard" flatpicking stuff. All the songs, with the exception of a Fisher's Hornpipe/Scotland medley were written by Roberto and I don't think he uses standard guitar tuning on any song on the disc. The tunings he chooses bring out a fullness in the guitar that is hard to achieve when flatpicking in standard tuning.

All of the music on the disc are slow and lyrical. There are no barn-burning fiddle tunes here. It is the kind of music you want to listen to when trying to relax and "chill out," or maybe when you sit down to read a good book you'd put this one on in the background. It is very soothing and comforting music.

I liked it so much that when I met Roberto at Kaufman's camp I asked if we could distribute the CD in the US through our FGM Records label. He agreed. I also asked him if I could run a tab of "Fisher's Hornpipe" so that readers of the magazine could have a chance to try one of his alternate tunings on a song they would be familiar with. Roberto had already tabbed this tune out for his students in Italy and handed me a copy right then and there.

Retune those strings and give this one a try! I think you'll enjoy it!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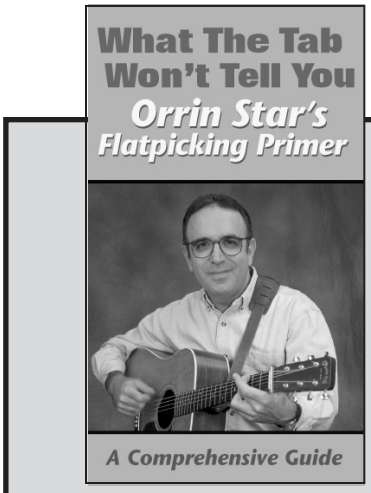

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Fisher's Hornpipe

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Roberto Dalla Vecchia

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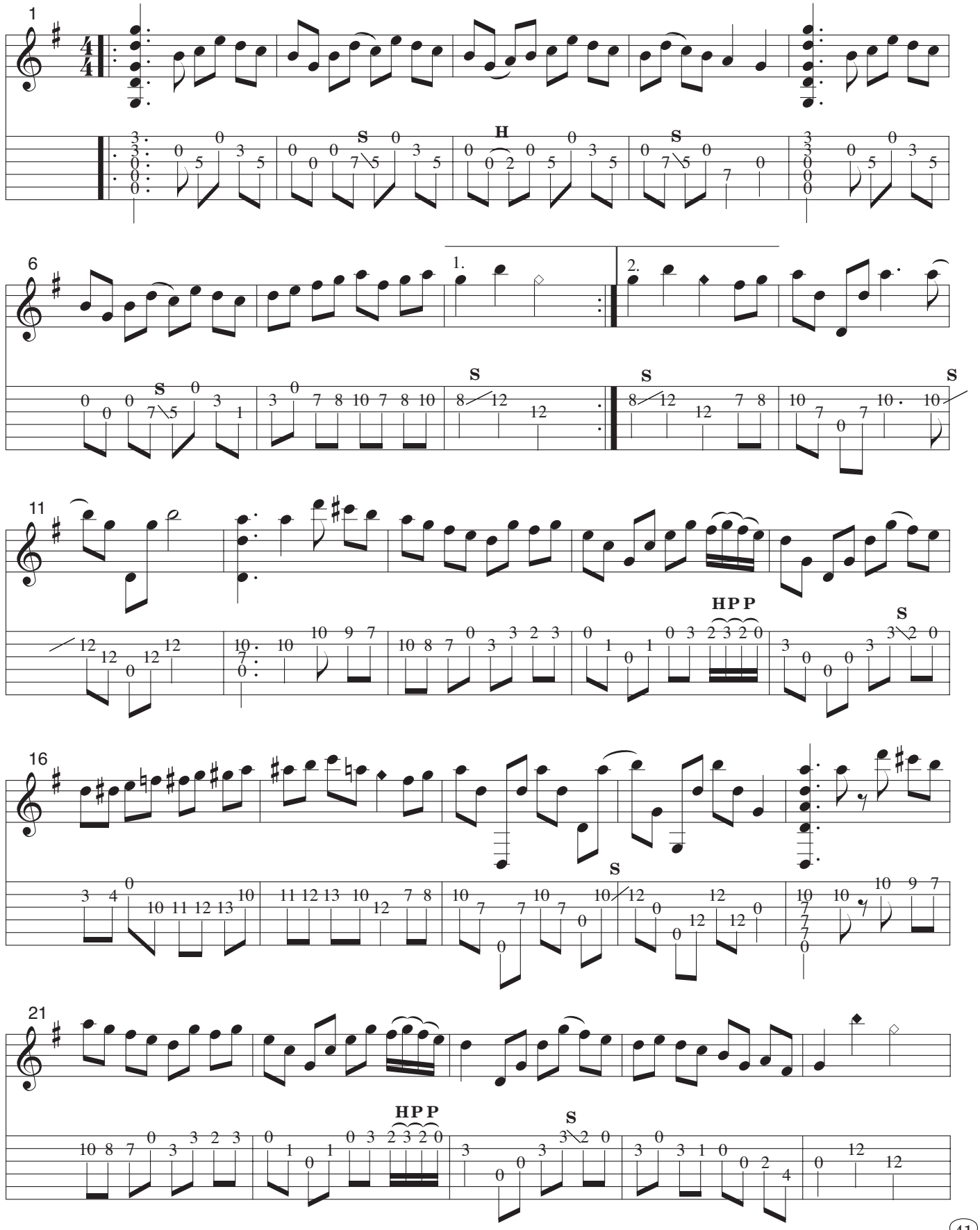
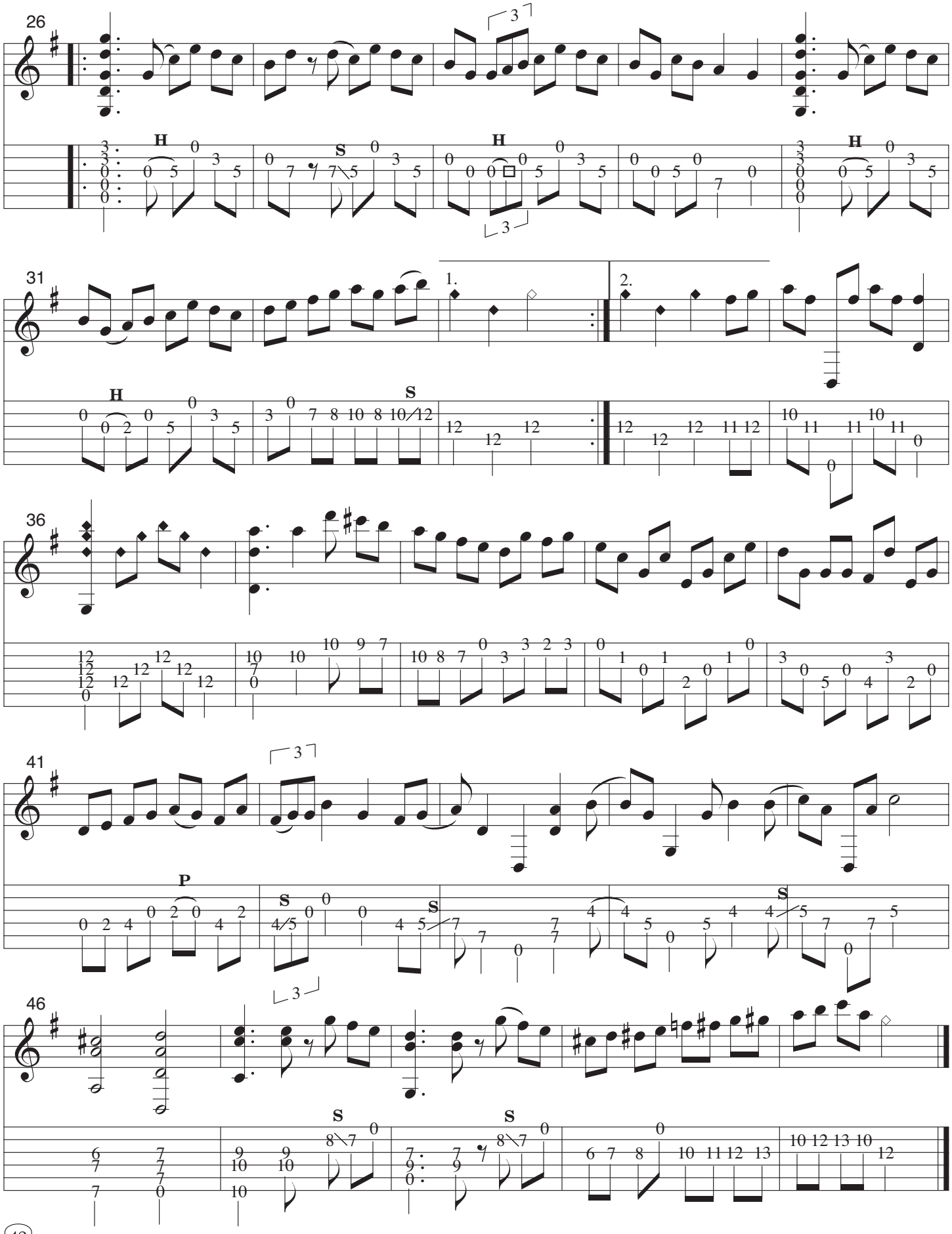

Fisher's Hornpipe (con't)

Break Time

by Chris Jones

Double-Stops - Part II

In the previous issue, we delved into the use of double-stops combined with cross-picking for use in a slower song. This time around, I want to stay with the double-stop theme, this time applying it to a faster break.

The break I chose is one that I taught to a class I had this past summer at Nashcamp. It worked well for students at a variety of playing levels, because it's quite simple but creates some subtle challenges for the more advanced player as well.

I'm sure you're familiar with the song I've chosen, unless you've been living in a secluded monastery for several decades. The Carter Family brought this to country music and it gained mass appeal when it became the title—and title cut—of the legendary three-LP set that the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band put together in the early 70s. That recording featured numerous country and bluegrass legends like Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson, and Roy Acuff singing and picking together. Not only was this a great song and recording, but more than thirty years later, it still takes the guesswork out of deciding what to play during a multi-band bluegrass festival finale/jam session. If it wasn't for that song, bluegrass festivals would close out with many of the top acts standing around on stage saying, "I don't know, what do you want to do?"

This means that once you master a break to this song, you'll be able to step up to the mike yourself during one of these finales. This is important because, while people now know what song to play, they still have no idea who's going take the breaks and when. You'll be able to confidently fill that void during that 10 seconds of group indecision.

On a more serious note, I also chose this song in honor of the late June Carter Cash who passed away earlier this year. She was the last surviving daughter of Mother Maybelle Carter.

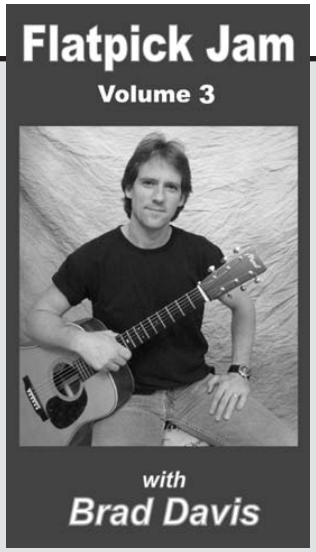
This break starts out very simply, with plenty of half-notes and lots of space. I'm basically using double stops, played out of G and C partial chord positions to embellish the basic melody. For the more advanced player (I saw you yawning!), take this as an opportunity to practice the fine points: make sure the double-stops are clean, with the two strings sounding like one pick-attack and without third notes and strings (possibly other parts of your guitar) finding their way in; work on the timing because the space between some of these notes can be its own kind of challenge; and make sure the double-stop slides are quick and clean.

Note that this break has two halves, with the second half beginning with the same strong note as the first, a G. I arrive at these notes with similar but not identical intro licks in measures 1 and 9 (refer back to previous columns about intro licks).

It ends in a pretty straightforward manner too, with a big fat G-run to signal the end. If you want to end this with a hot (as opposed to my lukewarm) lick, try taking off on your own from measure 13 and coming up with something else. The melody has already been stated very clearly in this break, so that's a pretty good place to put on your "jazz face" and just go for it.

This break uses double-stops where they're most useful: adding interest and sustain to longer melody notes. It should also be noted that two other simple techniques for filling up space in a sparse melody are used: one is alternating between a fretted note and the same note on the next open string (measures 2 and 10), and simply reverting back to some light rhythm (measure 8).

Have a good finale!



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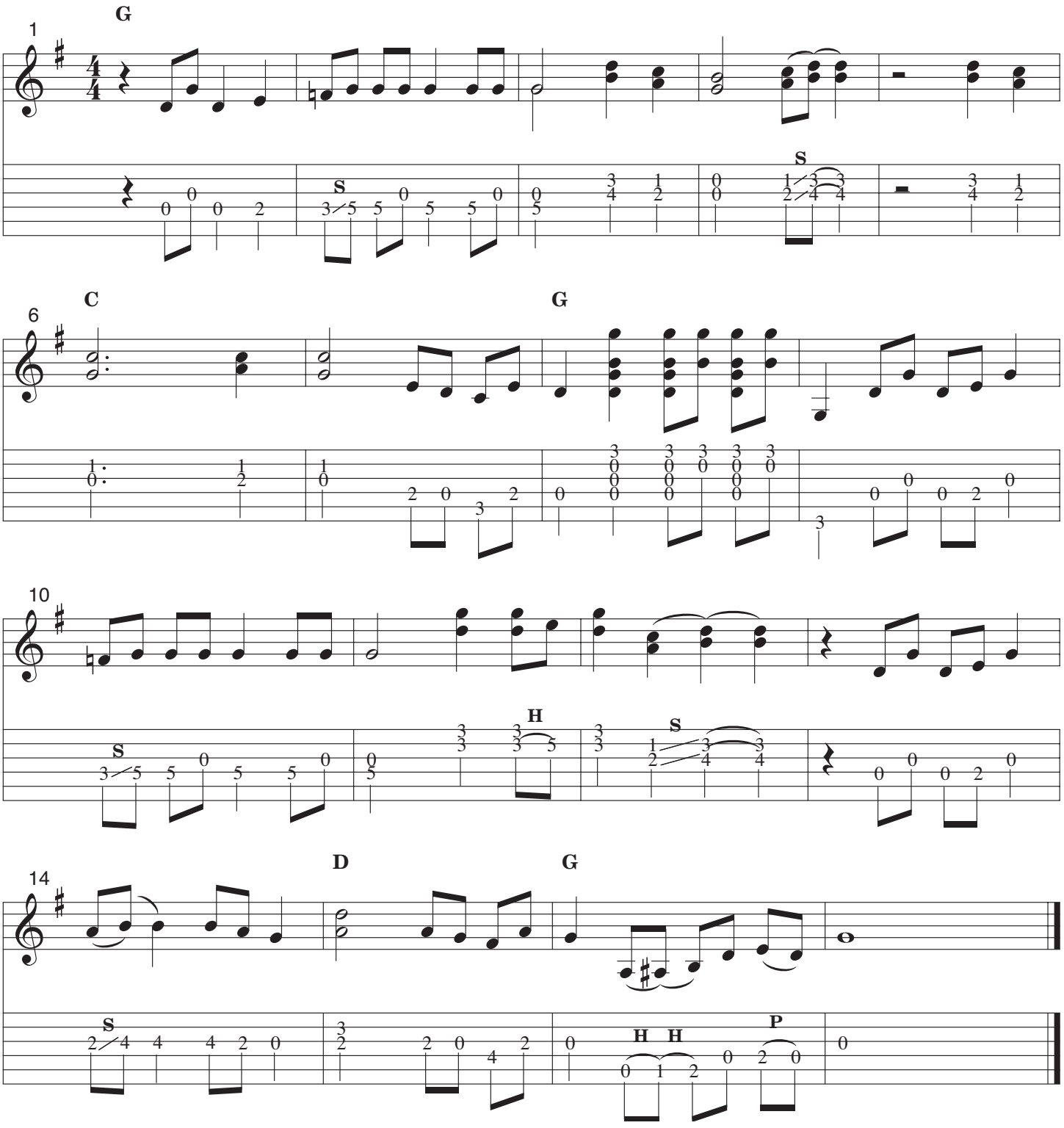
Gypsy Jazz Guitar

by Paul Mehling

On this fiftieth anniversary of the departure of Django Reinhardt (1910-1953) it's only appropriate that we guitarists—of all stripes—look into his ability to circumvent his severely handicapped left hand with an incredibly efficient use of the two remaining useable fingers. Last time we discussed a two-fingered melody by Django. This time we'll look at a similar across-the-fingerboard (as opposed to up-and-down-the-fingerboard like he usually would play) pattern, this one using all six strings.

First of all we need to talk about arpeggios, which are really chords played one note at a time. They can also be thought of as every other note in a given (major/minor/etc) scale.

These melody exercises are actually little things that Reinhardt, and others, use to either launch a melodic idea or to fill in a space where a little touch of this "chord" might be needed. One chord is a Major 6 chord, which means it would be a great I chord, or home base sound, either a good starting place or a good ending place. If you're really sharp, you could also use it as a minor 7 chord, with the root IMPLIED a minor third below its starting point. Play this at the third fret, starting on note G and it's a G6 chord. Now play the open E string below it (a minor third) then play the arpeggio and it's an E minor 7 chord. Cool, eh? One fingering, 2 uses.

The second example is a dominant 7 with 9 chord; also known as a 9 chord. (The dominant 7 is implied in the title. If it were not a dominant, or flatted, seventh it would be called a Major 9 chord or M9.)

One last thing to think about before attempting to play these: note the picking patterns! We're giving you some serious multi-tasking here. Let's start with the picking and add the fingerings (which by comparison, will be a breeze).

Let's look at the picking pattern for the dominant 9th chord:

This requires a down-bow marking for the "D" and an up-bow (v) for the 'v':

Example 1: DDDDDD

You can add an upstroke later, when you see the pitches added, you'll hear why. Let's try that now:

Example 2: DDDDDDV

And if you're really hot stuff:

Example 3: DDDDDD VVVVVV

Now for graduate level:

Example 4: DDDDDD VD VVVVV

Now add the pitches. Remember, this is an insight into Django's thinking (like how to turn major lemons into lemonade!)

Example A: C major dominant 9 arp ascending

Example 4A: C major dominant 9 arp ascending and descending, as ex 4 above with left hand added

Okay? Are you seeing the guitar in a new way? This is called "sweep picking," when you sweep the pick across the strings. You can sweep all six or as few as two adjacent strings. This can be very efficient if you make a study of it. For now, let's keep our lives relatively sane. Remember; don't bite off more than you can chew. Do each step of this—and any other new thing— completely. Master #1 before going on to #2, etc. In that way you'll have a happier life, and probably enjoy the process too. For those who really want to open up the can of mental whoop-tushy, I'd recommend some of the books or videos by Frank Gambale. He's the 21st century master of this stuff, but beware: it'll totally monopolize your life.

Back to sanity, the next picking pattern is a little more challenging:

Example 5: DDDV DDD

Very hard to do in reverse, but go for it anyways:

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Example 6: VVVVDVV

Of course, the picking should follow the left hand, so if you think you've got a better idea for the pitches and/or the fingering, go for it! I'm just here to open the door. After that, it's up to you.

Before you go, let's add the pitches:

Example B: C Major 6 Arpeggio ascending

In time, you'll start seeing this turn up in your playing. Maybe consciously you'll try to play these patterns, or maybe you'll surprise yourself and just play little segments here or there. Watch this column for future articles on sweep picking and diminished arpeggios.

Questions? Email me at: PazzoQuestions@hcsf.com
Have fun, safe journey.

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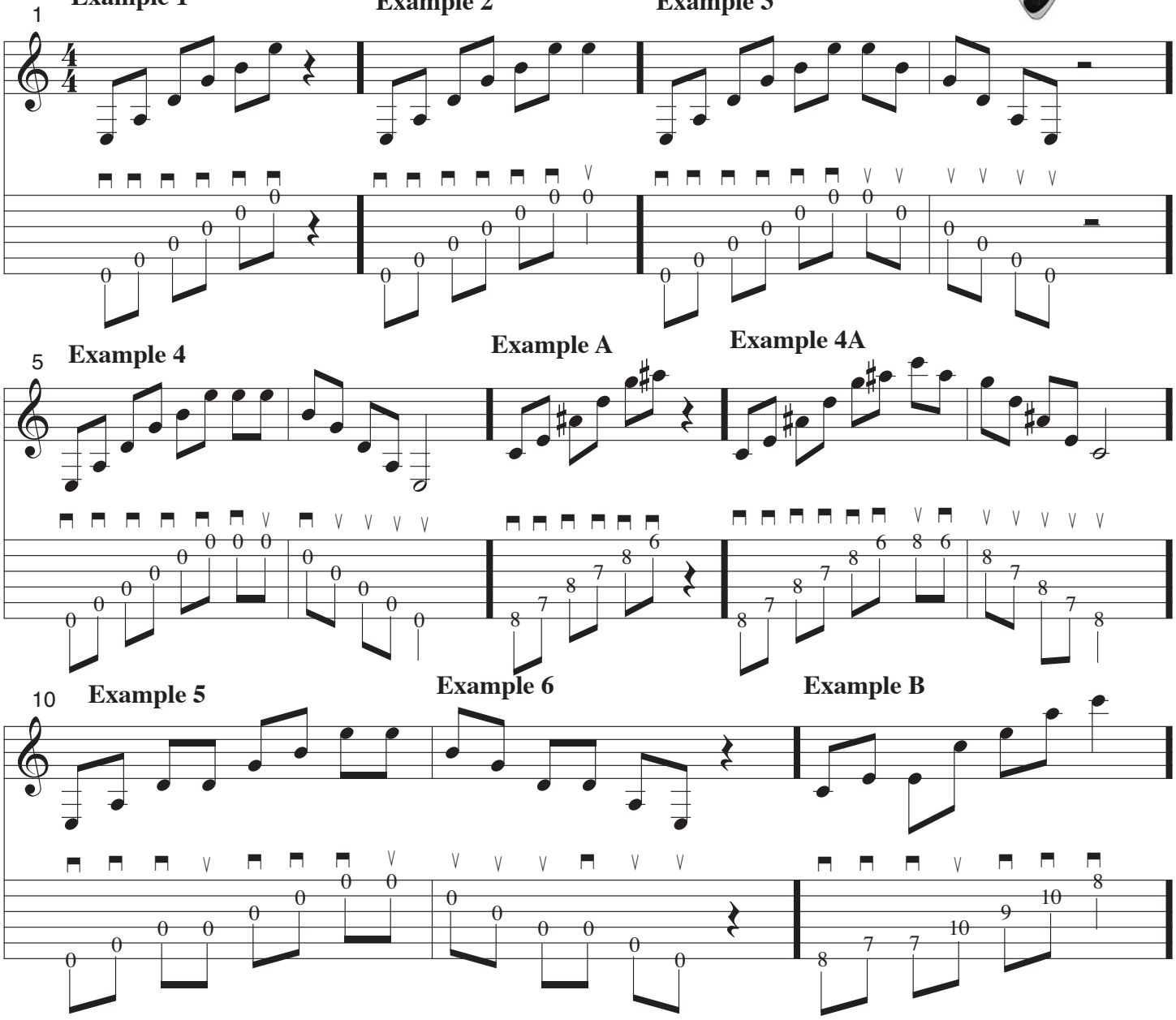
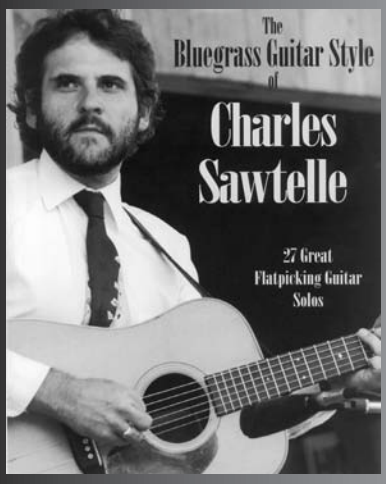

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Rock The Cradle Joe

I'm surprised that "Rock the Cradle Joe" isn't found in more flatpicker's repertoires. For it is indeed a rockin' old-time tune that sounds great played anywhere from medium fast to breakneck. It also sits very well on the guitar in its native key of D. (And that moment in the B-part where the G-chord first appears is especially dramatic and satisfying.)

The key to getting this tune to sing is to pick it like a southern fiddler would bow it—with a slight emphasis on the 2 and the 4 (what I refer to as the "pulse" of fiddle music in my teaching). And the back-to-back hammers on the open E-string coming from double stops add a beautiful dissonance to the proceedings that is distinctly fiddle-like.

Another nice feature of this tune from a flatpicking standpoint is that you can play it in two different octaves (both high and low) without running out of notes. When I'm working up an arrangement of a tune, trying it in a different octave is usually one of the first things I do; that alone usually leads to some interesting new directions. So our arrangement features both high and low versions for your consideration.

One of the hallmarks of a great tune is that each part leads seamlessly to the next and you thus find it hard to stop playing. So watch out: Joe could get ya!

"Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro" Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo, and mandolin player. This fall he will be leading flatpicking workshops at Fur Peace Ranch in Ohio and at the Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend in Virginia. See www.flatpick.com/ostar for details and all else.

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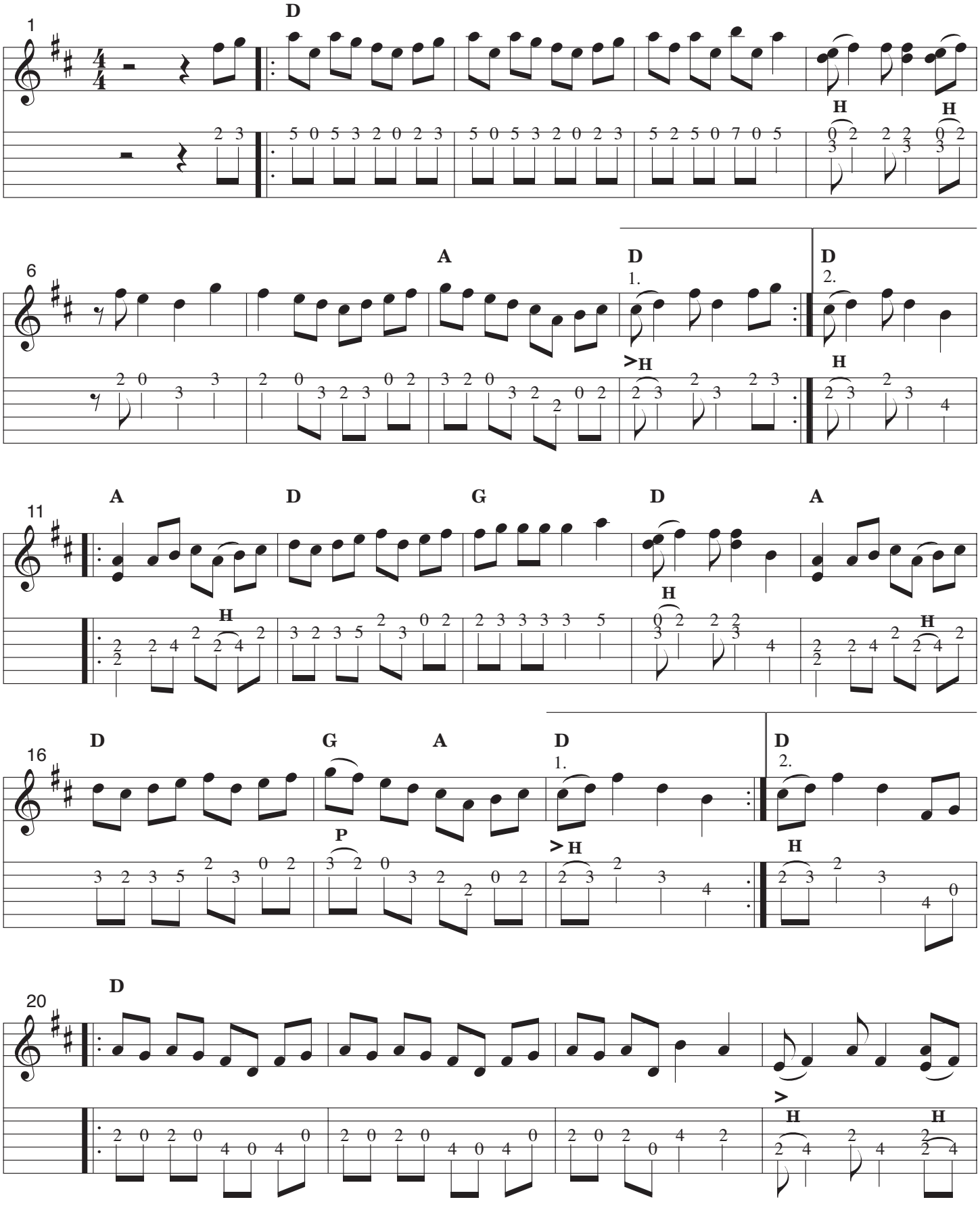
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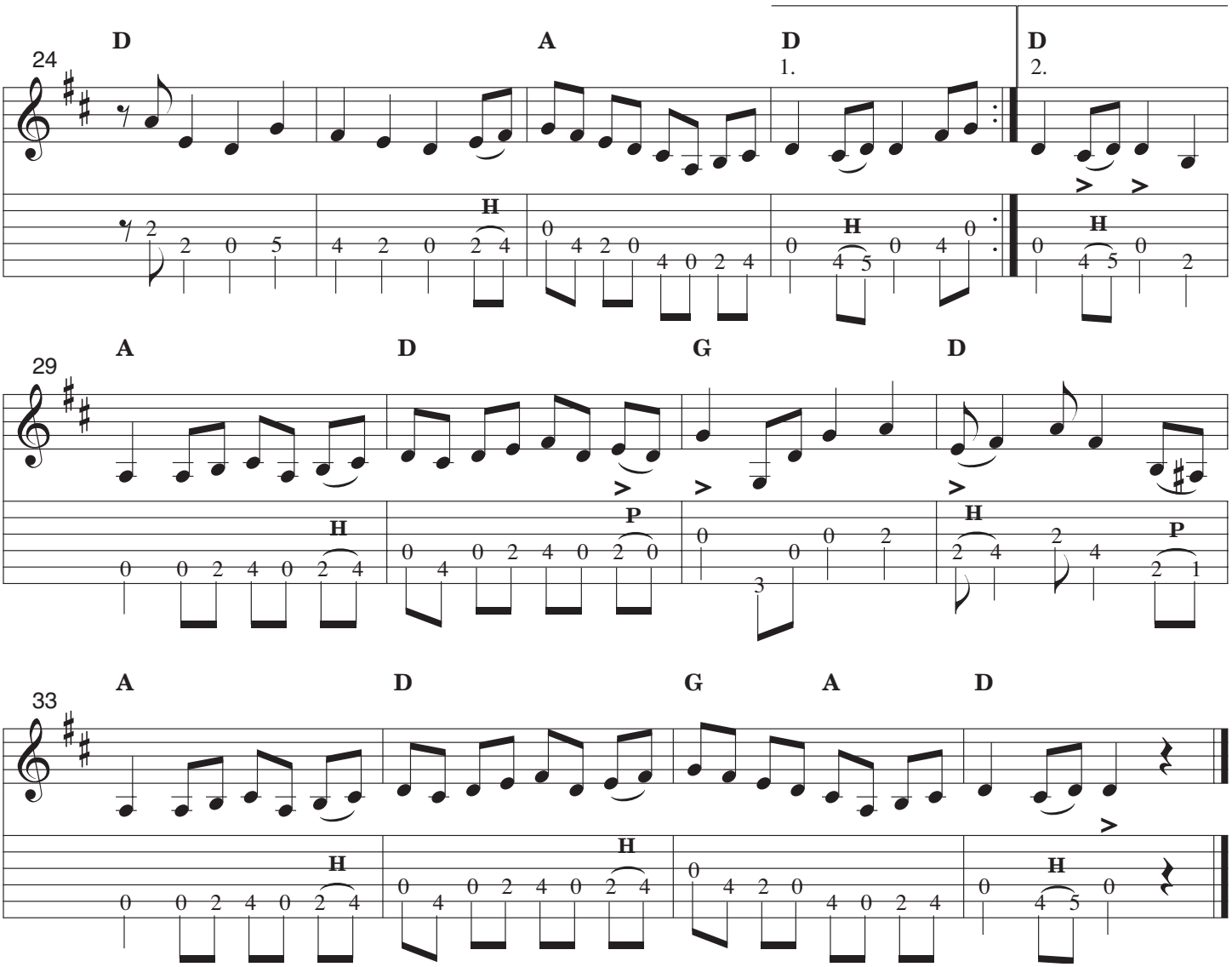
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Additionally, Wyatt is shown improvisationally accompanying various instruments (banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin) and then analyzing what he has done to provide the rhythmic foundation behind each instrument. Also featured are guest appearances by: Rickie Simpkins on fiddle (Sally Goodin' and Dusty Miller) and mandolin (Big Country and I Wonder Where You Are Tonight), Sammy Shelor on banjo (Ground Speed and Whitewater), Kenny Smith on guitar (Goodbye, Liza Jane and Bill Cheathum) and Tony Rice (Waltz for Indira, Manzanita, and Devlin). Wyatt provides guitar accompaniment to each of these artists and then analyzes the techniques he has employed.

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Belts and "Pretty Polly"

by Dix Bruce

I want to talk about belts. For years I had an old leather belt that served me well. The buckle was rounded enough so that, even though it was metal, it didn't scratch up the back of my guitar. And, it held my pants up pretty well. (As an extra precaution on both of these fronts I have added a "slight" spare tire over the past few years to my mid-section. It keeps the pants a little tighter and also makes a little pillow for the back of the guitar to rest on, away from the buckle. It was a sacrifice, but worth it for the sake of my art.)

Unfortunately, a couple years back, the ol' belt (see photo below) started to show its age and began to look too worn to be seen on stage.

Old Faithful Belt

So, I headed off to the store to buy a new one. Was I in for a surprise! I couldn't find a thing in black leather that was the right width for blue jean belt loops or didn't have a seven pound buckle with sharp horns, talons, motorcycles, or a Skoal logo on it. There were plenty of "dress" belts, but they all had squared off metal buckles with sharp corners. Of course I bought one in case of emergency. (See photo.) I figured that if I had to I could move it to the side a little and be extra careful, at least for a gig or two.

Guaranteed Guitar Scratcher

I tried every store in or near the mall, including a western store, and came up empty handed and frustrated. I pretty much hate shopping for anything but when I can't find what I'm looking for, forget it! Finally I left the mall and headed for a discount men's store. The first thing I saw on the belt rack caught me eye. It was a Docker's woven leather belt with a leather covered metal buckle. You've seen them all over the place, wherever men wear pants. (See photo below.) It looked like just what I needed and the price was right.

Docker's Belt

It turned out to be a good looking, non-scratching, and wonderful belt, except for one thing: at about an inch in width, it was just too slim for wide blue jean belt loops. It held my pants up, which I think is pretty much the bottom line for any belt, but it left unsightly and embarrassing gaps along the waistband when I cinched it up tight. Bad look indeed! Made pocket protectors look sexy. However, for dress pants with smaller belt loops, it works great. For jeans though, I was back at square one.

Early last summer I needed a new cowboy-type hat for some work in a country band. I went back to the western store near the mall and was shocked to find that the least expensive straw hats were priced at well over a hundred dollars. (Forget about the boots!) Then I remembered another small western store called Mora's tucked away in a strip mall up the street. All the window signs were in Spanish and the store catered to workers from Mexico. The hat selection was better and much more affordable. But the big surprise was the belt department.

Mora's had a rack of belts from here to that pole lamp over there. No, from here all the way to the rubber plant! Literally hundreds and hundreds of wide belts, most an inch and a half, made in Mexico, in all colors and styles, some woven, some solid, some stamped, some covered in rattlesnake skin. And the best thing: most of them had leather covered buckles! Just what I was looking for and even the fanciest was under $15.00. I have to admit I went a little overboard. I bought a black one (my daily favorite), a brown one, and to my great surprise once I got home, a black belt stamped with brown eagles. (See photos below) (I haven't had the guts to wear that one yet. It may have been a mistake — I don't even remember buying it. No memory at all.)

New Black Belt

New Brown Belt

Eagle Motif

Aside from the eagle motif, these belts have worked out perfectly. I have no worries about scratching my guitar and the width of the leather actually fits my belt loops. They're rugged and have taken a beating without showing much wear. The tongues on these belts can still scratch, but the ones I bought had the ends flattened and bent toward the buckle to minimize that possibility. So, if you're a concerned guitar player searching for a good looking leather belt that won't wreck your guitar, forget the men's stores and check out the western stores where the farm workers and ranch hands shop.

The music below has nothing to do with belts. As I was listening to some old Stanley Brothers CD reissues, (*The Early Years 1958-1961*) I was struck both with how much their sound depended upon lead guitar and how beautifully the guitars were played and recorded. The richness of the sound on some of the cuts is stunning.

The guitarists included, at different times, Al Elliot, Gene Meadows, Bill Napier, Ralph Mayo, Curley Lambert, George Shuffler, and Carter Stanley. Though there were many different players with a range of voices, there's an overall Stanley guitar sound. The lead guitarists frequently capoed high up the neck and ventured away from playing out of the familiar keys of G and C. Quite often the guitarists played leads and fills out of A positions.

I thought it would be interesting for us to explore a solo played out of the key of A. Since this was inspired by listening to the Stanleys, I used one of their more famous songs, "Pretty Polly."

If you listen to the Stanley's version of "Pretty Polly," you'll notice that Ralph takes liberties with the timing in his vocal and stretches certain lyrics like the third "Polly" adding beats and in some cases whole measures to the form. The instrumentalists play their solos straighter, without the extra beats or measures, and this version reflects that. I added the lyrics to help you keep your place.

Almost the entire solo to "Pretty Polly" is played over an A chord. As I play it, I hold the A chord for the strums and use my fourth finger to fret the lead notes, where necessary. You'll find it to be a great pinkie exercise.

Many of the lead notes are played with hammer ons, which to my ear gives an old timey feel to the solo and suggests almost a frailing banjo sound. To have the solo sound more minor, substitute Am chords for the A major chords. Also try muting the second string, second fret C# note of the A chord strums by lifting your fretting finger just enough to stop the sound. The C# is the third of the A chord. The third in any chords determines whether that chord is major or minor. In this case a C# gives is an A major, a C natural gives us an A minor. If you leave the third out altogether, it gives the chord a nebulous, more modal sound.

Much of the "feel" of this solo comes from the many "blue" notes in the melody. In addition to stretching the time on lyrics, Ralph flats most of the thirds: C# becomes C natural, and sevenths: (G# becomes G natural). You'll find the first of these, a G natural note, in the pickup measure, and a C natural note, in the first full measure.

If you're used to playing leads out of G and C, you may find playing out of A to be a challenge. It'll feel strange until you've spent some time in A. But, playing out of A will give you sounds you can't get from G and C. It's a timbre you should experiment with and master. We all need to have as many tonal colors as possible under out musical belts. For more on belts, see above.

"Brothers at Heart" by Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally is available online from http://www.musixnow.com You can preview soundclips from several of the songs. Dix's basic flatpicking text "Beginning Country Guitar Handbook" and CD is also available through Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523.

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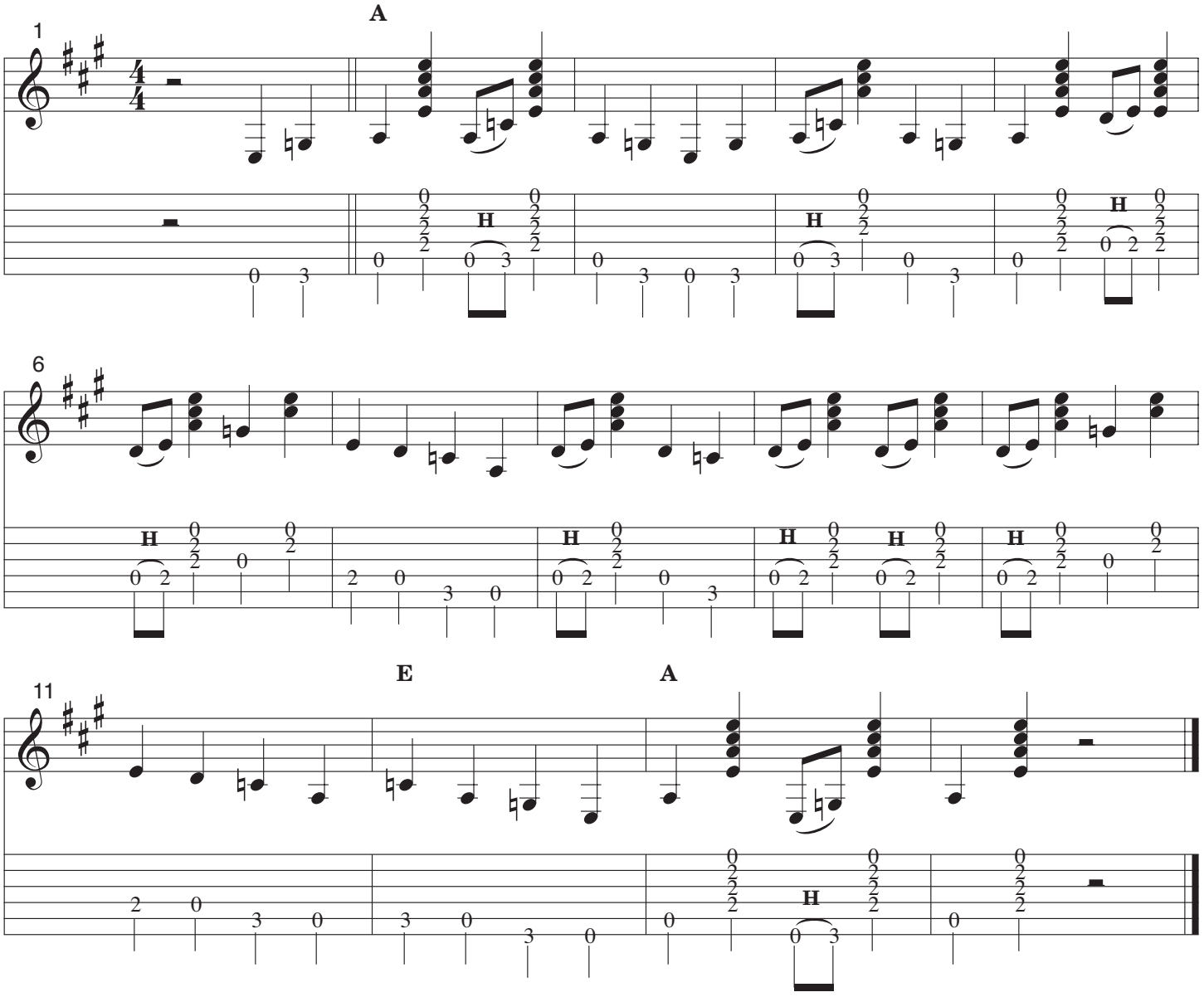
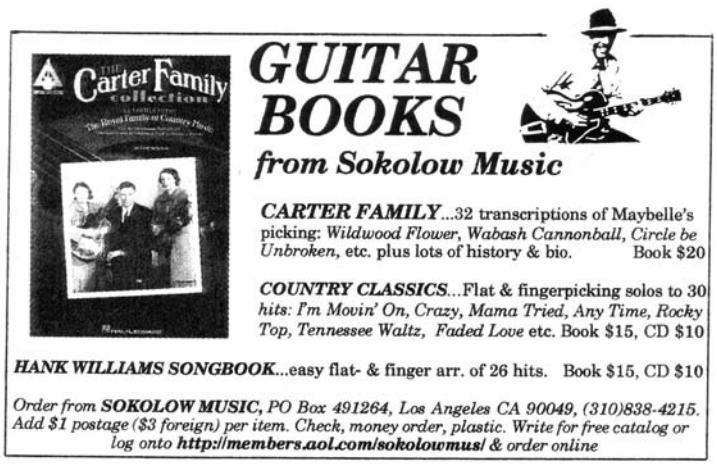
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Music Theory:
Mastering the Fingerboard
Technical Studies for Flatpickers

by Michel A. Maddux

The Inner Circle

Music is a lifetime pursuit: you're always searching for another way to play through the changes, another way to play the melody, a better and easier way to improvise, and continually trying to find new sounds to keep it fresh.

At this point in our study, we have looked at scales, floaties, and using the top three strings for chord and crosspicking solos. Today I want to spend some time thinking about different ways of using the inner strings, the inner workings of chords. By that I mean using the inner strings of the guitar to play through a solo. This can be done with pieces of chords. Just as we examined using pieces of chords using the top three strings, for this article we will take a close look at chords using the middle strings.

Beyond the Barre

The first example shows the G chord in third position. Remember, positions indicate the fret on which the index finger falls. In this case, the index finger is on the third fret, and we finger the G chord the same as the first position F chord. The example shows the G. playing all six strings with the index barre, the G7 barre, then the top strings, and finally the middle strings. Move that up to fifth position (the key of A) and play the same thing, and now move to sixth position (Bb), and so on. Notice also that this form is the first position E major, an E7 chord.

Mess around with the G-Middle form a little bit. Notice that you can strum across the strings, you can play them individually, you can crosspick them, and by lifting the middle finger, you get the interesting open G string ring as well. Notice also that the Gminor form moves to any position on the fingerboard, to be used for minors in other keys, as in Aminor on the fifth fret, and so on.

The middle form of the C and D chords (so called, because the fingering and scale form is the same as the first position C major), provide you with similar possibilities. Strum the C and C7 in first position. Next, we move to the D form. Notice the consistent patterns between the forms and the scale pattern. For this form, you could play the top note (the open E string for the C, or the 2nd fret F# for the D chord). I have omitted it, but practice adding that note for color and additional texture in the major form.

The Dminor form is a form that we covered in a previous column on inversions. The full form is a bit challenging to play, although I find it useful as an arpeggio, and crosspicking through the top three notes.

Using these simple new chord forms, we can now play standard major and minor tunes, and get a different sound for both lead and rhythm.

The exercise uses these concepts (crosspicking using the forward roll). Practice using the backward and inside out rolls, along with simple strums to get the full range of possibilities.

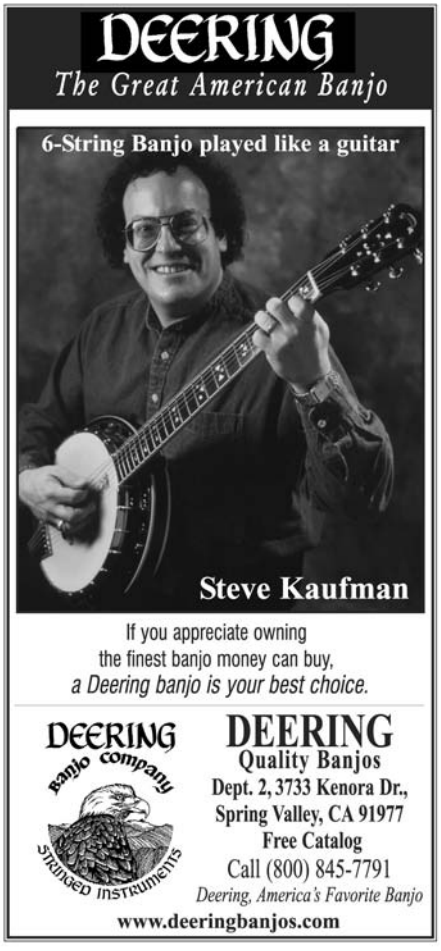
Take a standard tune that you already know and try playing the chords using these new forms. Experiment and see what interesting sounds you can create.

As an example of using these chords in a song, I like to play the classic Grateful Dead tune, "Rider." I learned the tune from John Starling and the Seldom Scene, and made up the intro using the inner roll.

Have fun, and keep on pickin'.

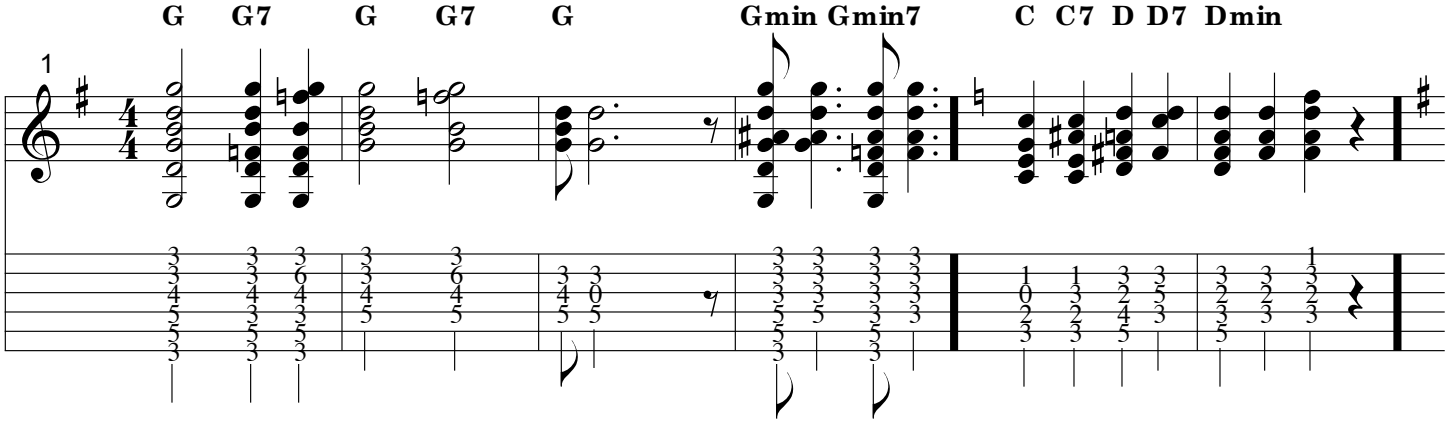
About the author:

Mike lives in Woodland Park, Colorado, where he plays bluegrass and jazz, writes, teaches, and studies music. Watch for his band, the Bertye Maddux Band, coming soon to a festival near you. You can visit his web site at http://home.rmi.net/~madflatpicker01/index.html. You can find the band schedule, sound bytes, photos, and email addresses there. Drop Mike a line with questions or comments via email, or c/o this magazine.

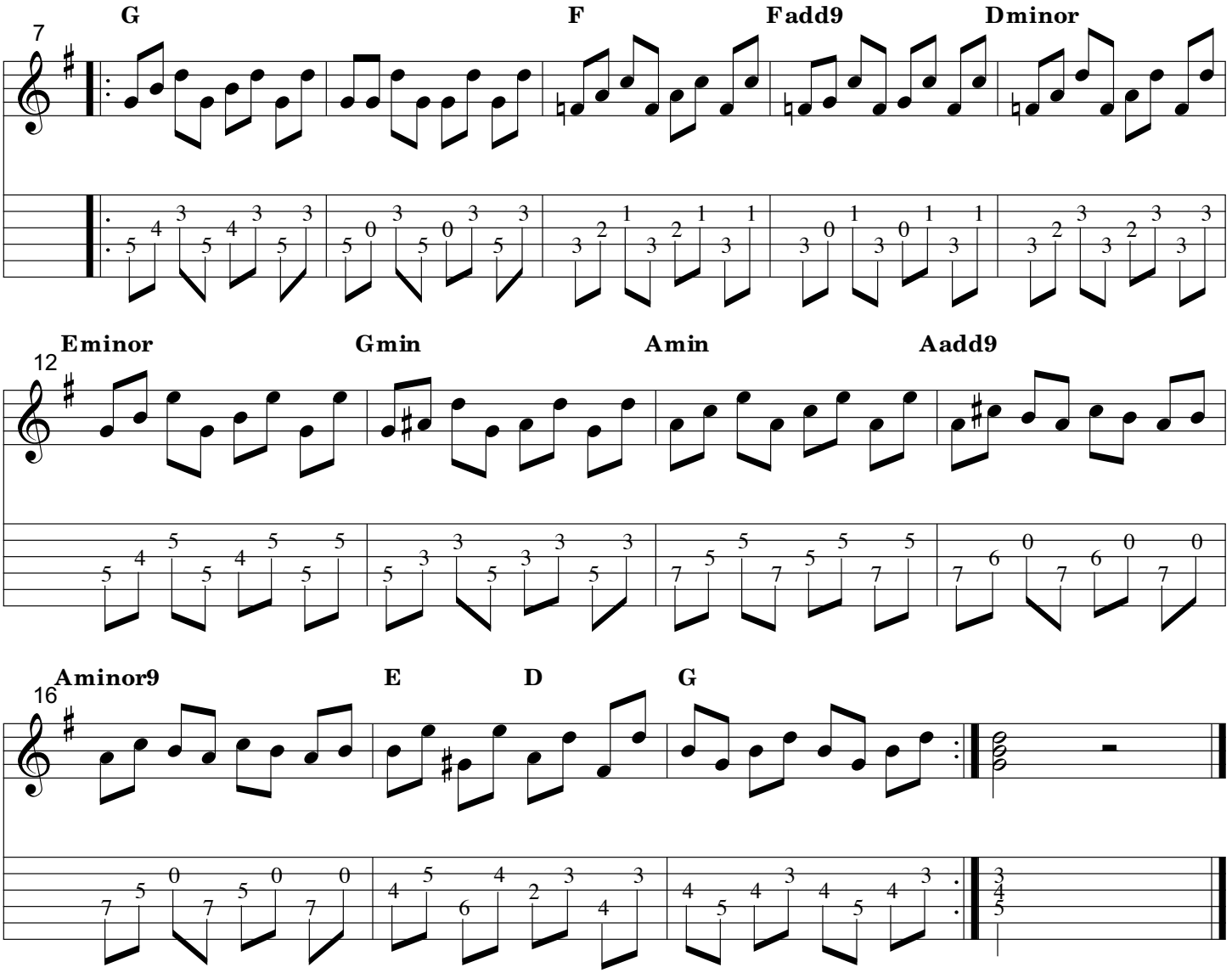


Audio CD
Track 39

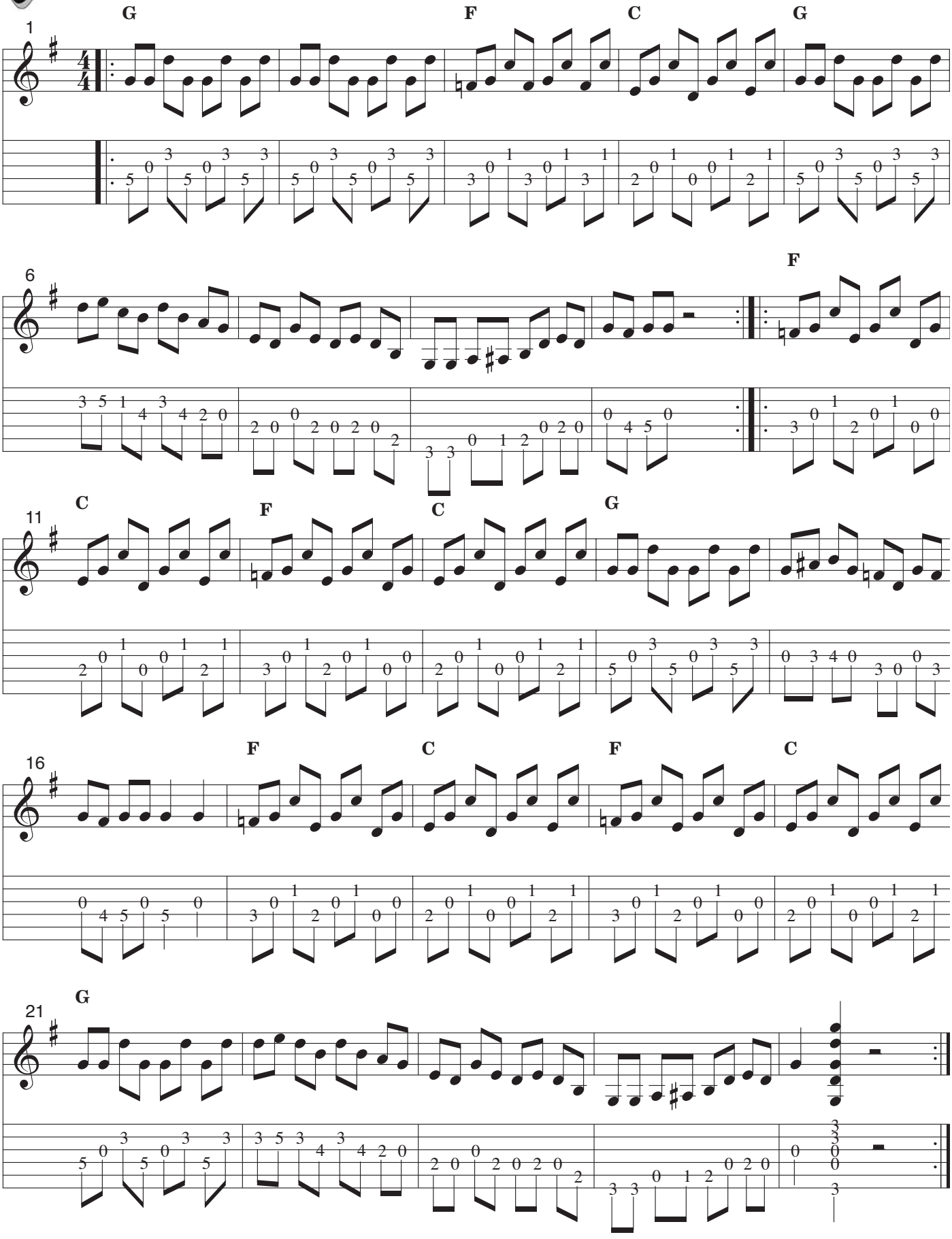
Example 1: G Forms From the Barre Chord



Example 2: C - D Middle Form Exercise

Exercise: The middle rollout

Audio CD
Tracks 40 & 41

Rider Kick-Off

Arranged by Mike Maddux

NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

"Dynamite Dynamics"

All music is driven by dynamics. Pop the compact disc of your favorite flatpicker in your CD player and listen to how melodies and solos pulse along on top of the rhythm. Sometimes the pulse is soft and on the back side of the beat and sometimes it is frantic and hard—loud even—and on the very front side of the beat causing you to feel the excitement too! I called this column "Dynamite Dynamics" for a fun title, but think about dynamite for a moment. Its fuse has a fairly soft sound and then bang! Dynamics! You can have great chops, speed and accuracy, and licks for days, but without dynamics it's all one tone. No variation! Everyone needs variation. Everyone needs dynamics.

Many ask "where do I start dynamics?" and I would say on the beat. If you are new at this then I recommend starting on the "1-beat."

Example 1: If you're playing a song like "Blueridge Cabin Home," then you know that you will have a count of "1&2&3&4&1&2&3&4" and so on. Think of the first (1-beat) as the starting beat for your dynamic emphasis. This 1&2&3&4 will continue to rotate over and over again. I will bold the beats that you can hit a little harder below.

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & **1** & 2 & 3 & 4.

What ever you play on these beats, try to hit them a little harder when they come by. If you have a G-run on the 1-beat, then hit that G-run harder when that beat comes around. Make the "&2&3&4" of the measure softer. Whatever it is you want to play on those beats, make it softer.

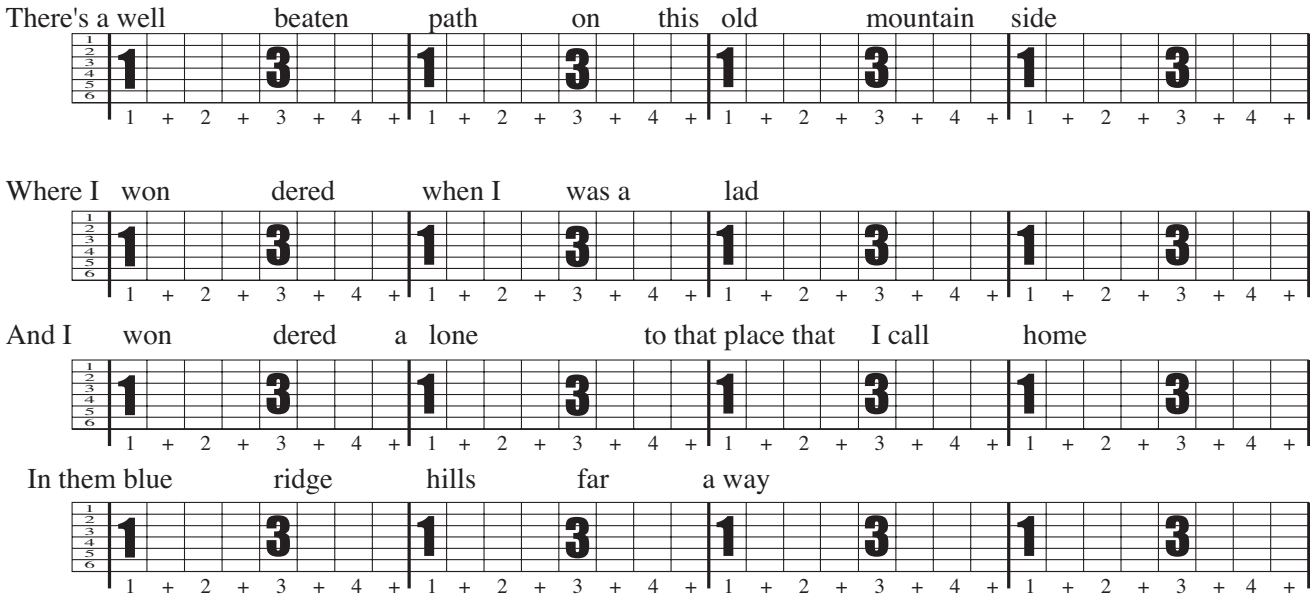
Example 2: Placing dynamic emphasis on beat (1and 3). I will bold those beats below.

1 & 2 & **3** & 4 & **1** & 2 & **3** & 4.

Singing the beats and emphasizing the harder hits during "Little Cabin Home on the Hill" can really help.

Example 3: below. Good luck and have fun with this.

Example 3: Blue Ridge Cabin Home


There's a well beaten path on this old mountain side
Where I won dered when I was a lad
And I won dered a lone to that place that I call home
In them blue ridge hills far a way
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

Although its title may not seem that of a gospel song, "Great Speckled Bird" is nevertheless one of the all-time great gospel songs. If you're a fan of Roy Acuff's music (as I've always been), you may have either grown up with the piece or at least heard it once or twice. However, if you're not familiar with it, I think you'll be taken with its wonderfully simple melody and equally wonderful message on your first hearing. Roy first recorded it in 1936 and it's the song that made him famous. Describing the impact the song had on his career, he said "It's the Bird that brought me to the Opry."

The title of the song is based on chapter 12, verse 9 of the great prophet Jeremiah's book in the Old Testament. In it he questions the prosperity of the wicked and asks the Lord to punish the wicked. Different wordings of the verse are found in various Bible translations: "Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird"; "Has not my inheritance become to me like a speckled bird of prey that other birds of prey surround and attack?"; "Mine inheritance is as the speckled bird; all the birds of heaven are against it"; or "Or is my heritage a speckled bird for the birds to flock on her thus from all directions?". As to an interpretation of the meaning of the speckled bird, some say it's best to consult the "theologian of your choice." Others say that the speckled bird symbolizes the church, in reference to a dove sacrificed in Jeremiah's time which was speckled by its own blood.

Although the words and music for "Great Speckled Bird" are credited to Reverend Guy Smith, I've not had any luck determining when it was written, except that it is old enough to be in the public domain. At any rate, the first verse goes like this.

"What a beautiful thought I am thinking,
Concerning a great speckled bird.
Remember her name is recorded,
On the pages of God's Holy Word."

An interesting side note to all of this (something unrelated to gospel music) has to do with another couple of songs many of us grew up listening to. Both were number one hits in 1952 and both were based on the melody of "Great Speckled Bird." First was Hank Thompson's "The Wild Side of Life," which included the line "I didn't know God made honky tonk angels/I might have known you'd never make a wife". As a rebuttal or answer to the first, the second song later that same year was Kitty Wells' first hit, "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," the song that really launched her career. Her version included the line, "It wasn't God who made honky tonk angels/as you said in the words of your song." Needless to say, neither theme or message is nearly as edifying as that of "Great Speckled Bird." To obtain all of the verses, just plug "Great Speckled Bird" into your browser and choose from the many lyric sites that come up.

The arrangement of "Great Speckled Bird" shown here is actually two arrangements. The first one, in measures 1 through 17, is the simpler of the two. Since the melody consists only of 16 bars and is therefore completed in measure 17, you can omit the second arrangement if you choose.

There's only one item to touch on in the first arrangement, having to do with measures 6 and 14. In both measures, hold the second string 3rd fret with your index finger and the fourth string 4th fret with your middle finger. To insure playing the second and fourth strings with one pick stroke, make sure your middle finger touches the third string in such a way as to block it. That'll make more sense when you hear the recording for this issue.

Beginning with the pickup notes in measure 17, the second arrangement includes lots of triplets and more doodads than the first one. The first such doodad is the slide in measure 20. Begin your slide from 2nd to 5th fret with your ring finger, allowing your little finger to hold the second string 5th fret and your index finger to hold the first string 3rd fret. Next, in measure 30, hold down the second string 3rd fret, third string 5th fret, and fourth string 4th fret as a chord. As for the triplets in the second arrangement, it's best to listen to the CD for timing reference.

As always, hope you enjoy learning and playing the tab this time around, and as always, please pay us a visit at www.lewalt.com to see what new flatpick listings have been added.

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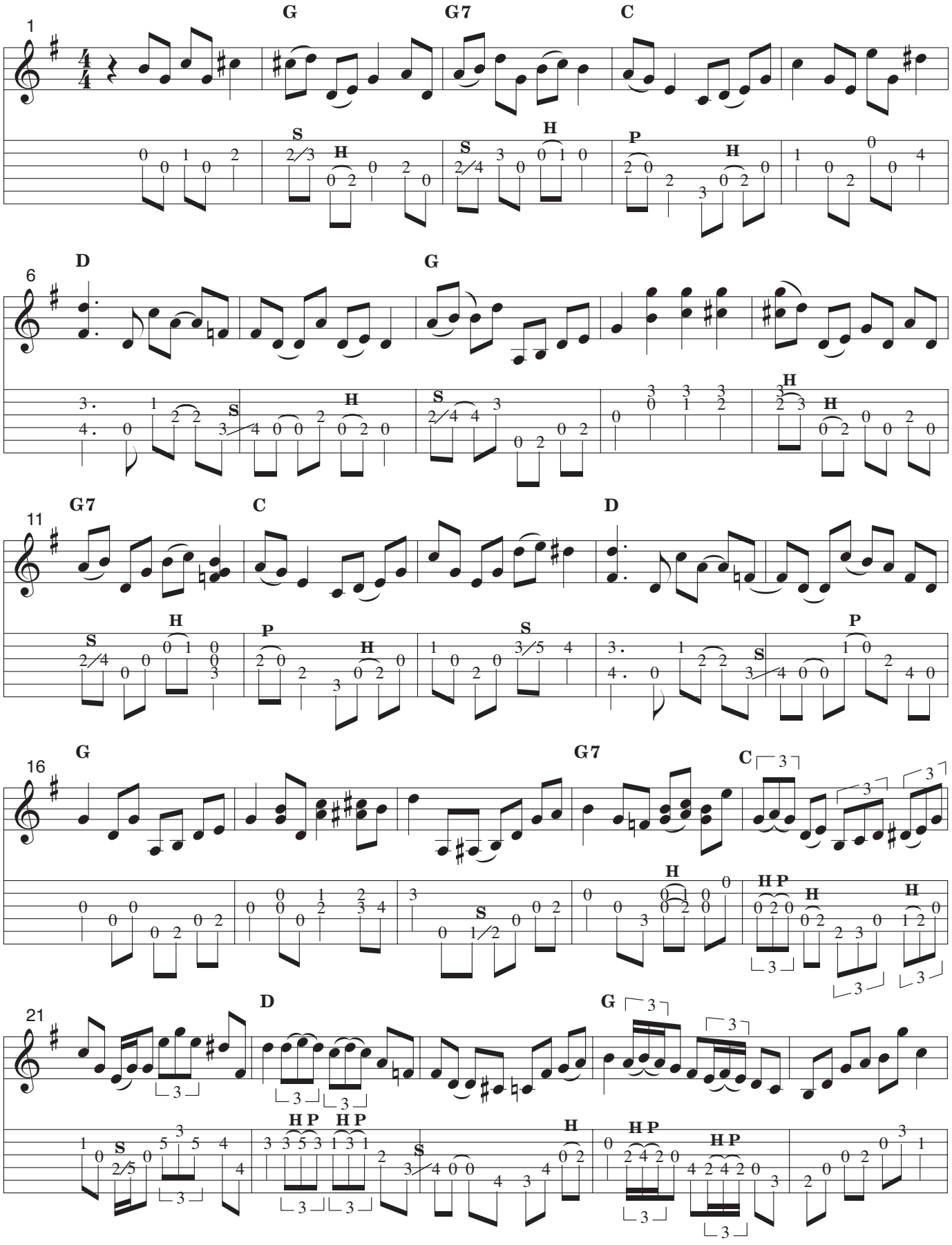
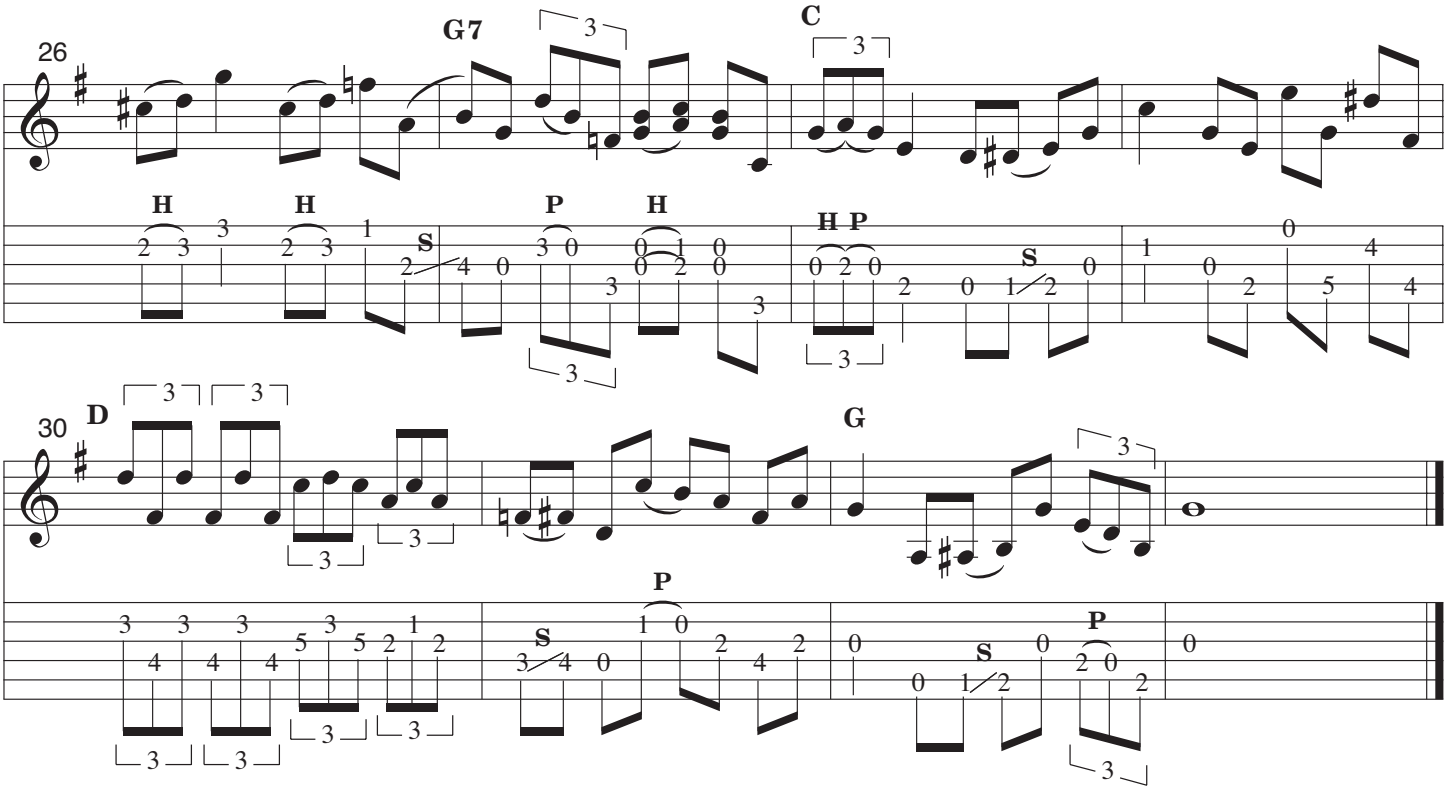
Audio CD
Tracks 43 & 44

Great Speckled Bird

Arranged by Harold Streeter

Great Speckled Bird (con't)



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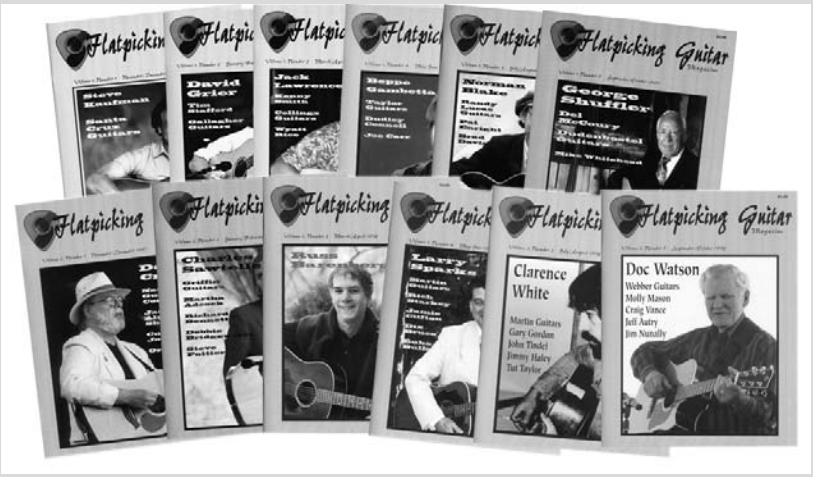
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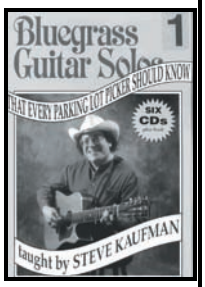

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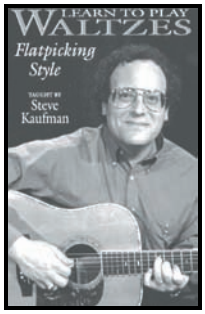

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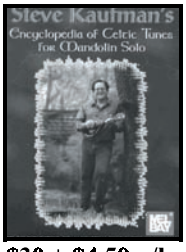

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"Copthorne Blues"

Copthorne Blues

"Copthorne Blues" is a slow, lazy kind of blues, pitched in the key of C. I wrote it several years ago while staying at the Copthorne Hotel in the little village of Copthorne just outside of London. I had my usual extreme case of jet lag (no sleep) and it had rained in London for a week.

It is good practice to learn the basic lines on a blues tune and then try playing the melody by ear in various keys and positions on the guitar fingerboard.

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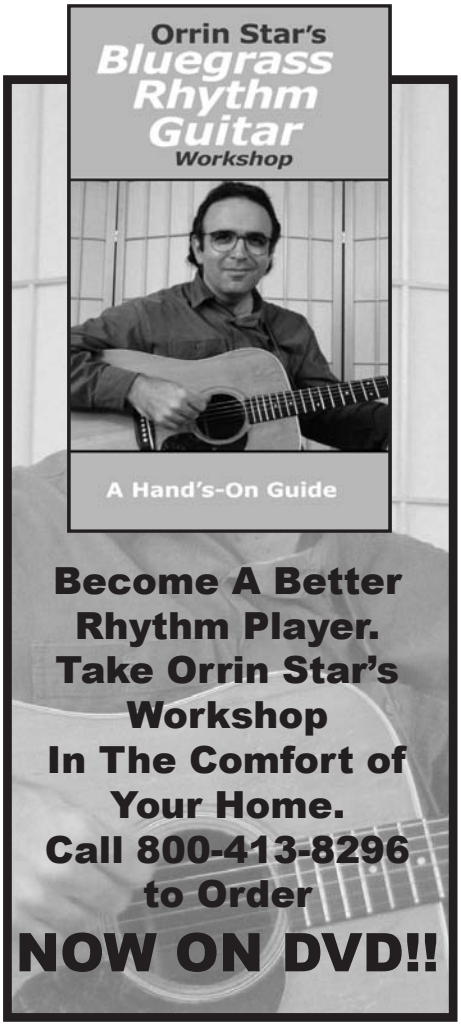

Audio CD
Track 45

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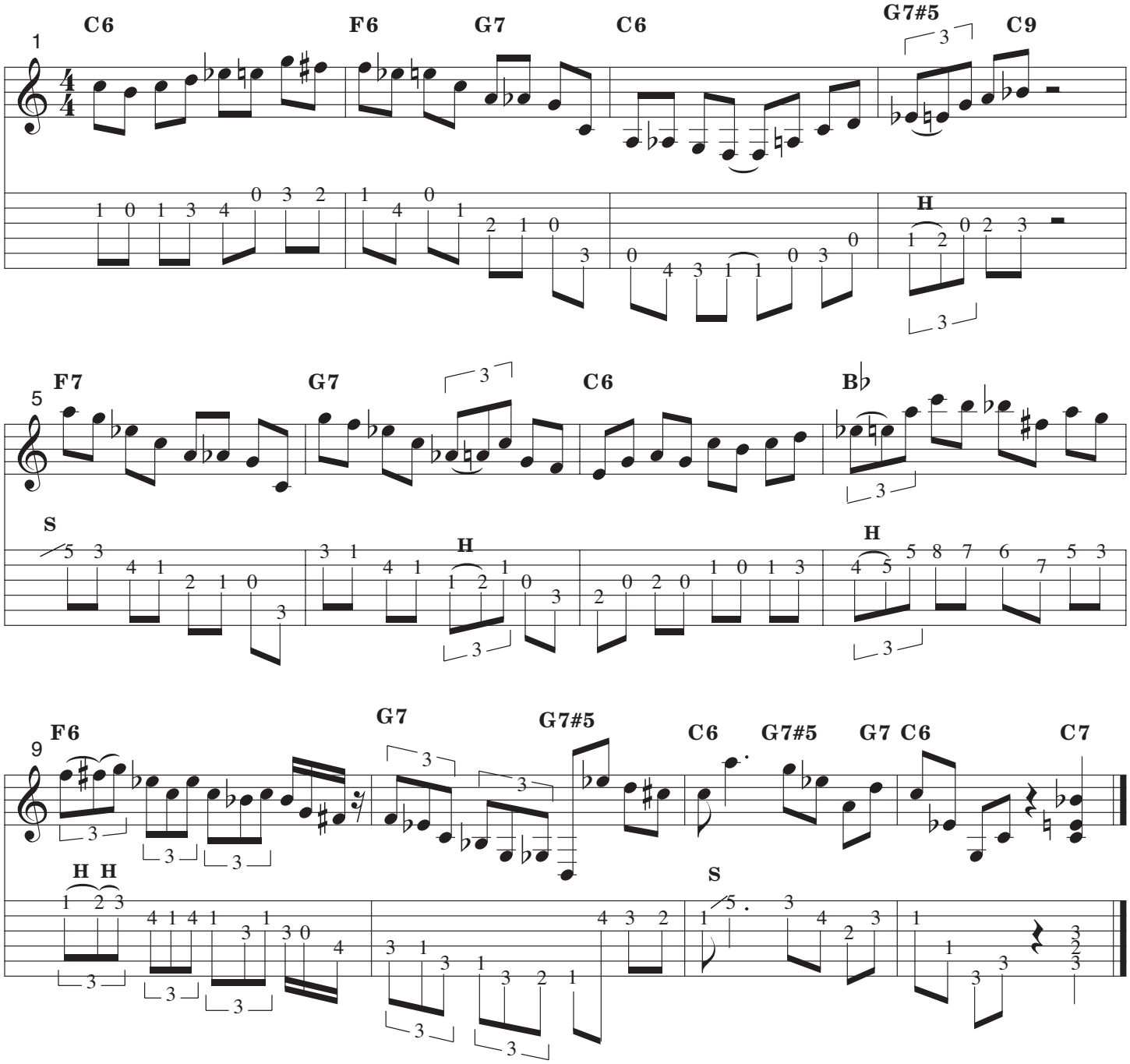
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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES
by Adam Granger

NORTHERN JIGS AND NASHVILLE DIGS

READING *EASYTAB*

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

Greetings, pickers everywhere. This is the third jig column I've done, so I have made an administrative decision. (Mind you, when the entire organization consists of one person, administrative decisions are easy to make, seldom disputed and generally happily lived with.) Okay, loyal citizens, here's the deal:

In my first two columns on jigs, I covered—often twice—everything the happy healthy picker needs to know about jigs: what they are, different types, how to back them up and how to pick them. Rather then repeat all of that here, I refer you to *FGM*s V1 N2 and V5 N4. Check this stuff out: it's good info, and you need to know it. Remember: attempts to pick these tunes in an uninformed state could lead to plano-plectral mayhem.

I am thus presented with the opportunity, space-wise, to reminisce about living in Nashville in 1971. At some point, we reach a degree of veneration at which we can legitimately wax nostalgic. We can even put our boring memories into print and call them "vibrant first-hand recollections of an era long gone", or some such tripe. Does a third of a century gone by thus entitle these memories? I dunno; you tell me.

But first, the tunes:

I got a bee in my bonnet (All right. The secret is out and I'm not ashamed. I wear bonnets. They happen to be very comfortable and functional, okay?) to do three Northern jigs whose titles all begin with the letter B. Where else to look but *Granger's Fiddle Tunes for Guitar*, where I found not three, but four such items. I eliminated one of the four by random blackball. As I hope you'll hear on the recording, they make a great medley played right out of the box in alphabetical order. The keys move up in fourths, from A to D to G. I wish I could take credit for this, but it's just blind dumb luck. Oh, and by the way, I used straight alternation to pick these tunes on the *FGM* CD (as opposed to the "down-up-down down-up-down" scheme).

A couple of housekeeping notes: The adjacent-string 2's in the *Bachelor Jig* can be played with one finger or two. One finger gives a bit more clipped sound; it's the way I pick the tune on the *FGM* CD. We are offered the same choice in *Bessie Brown,* where I opt to finger the 2's separately. Finally, watch the tag of the B part in *Bonnie Dundee*: it's got a tricky little arpeggio in it, but it's worth the effort, as the low D notes creates a surprising and sublimely wholesome effect.

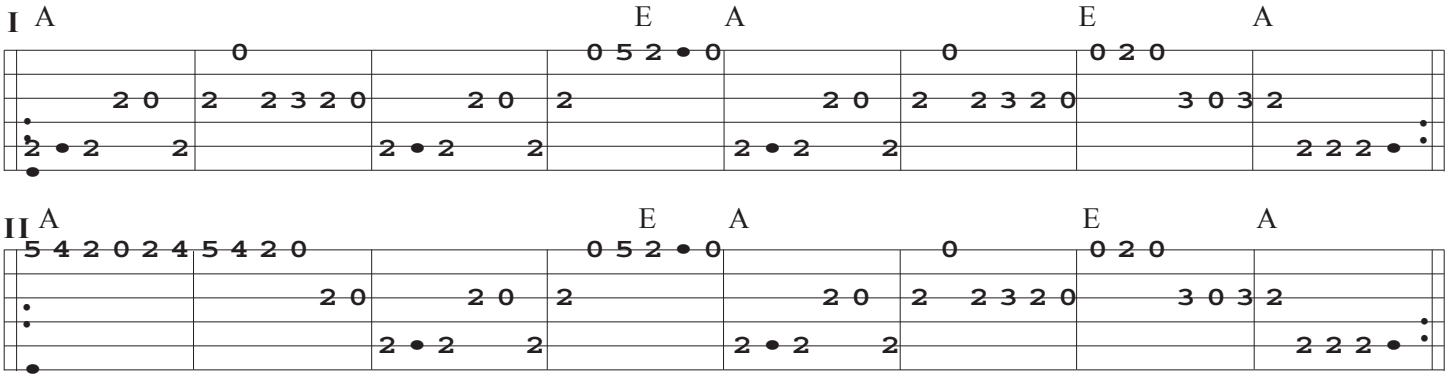
I've added pick-up notes to start parts here and there, and a bit of ornamentation. I play several accompaniment styles in the course of this medley, all of which are described in the earlier issues I already nagged you about.

Okay, without further comment, I offer you the three Northern "B" jigs, followed by an abridged (believe it or not) memoir of my time in Nashville.

Audio CD
Track 47

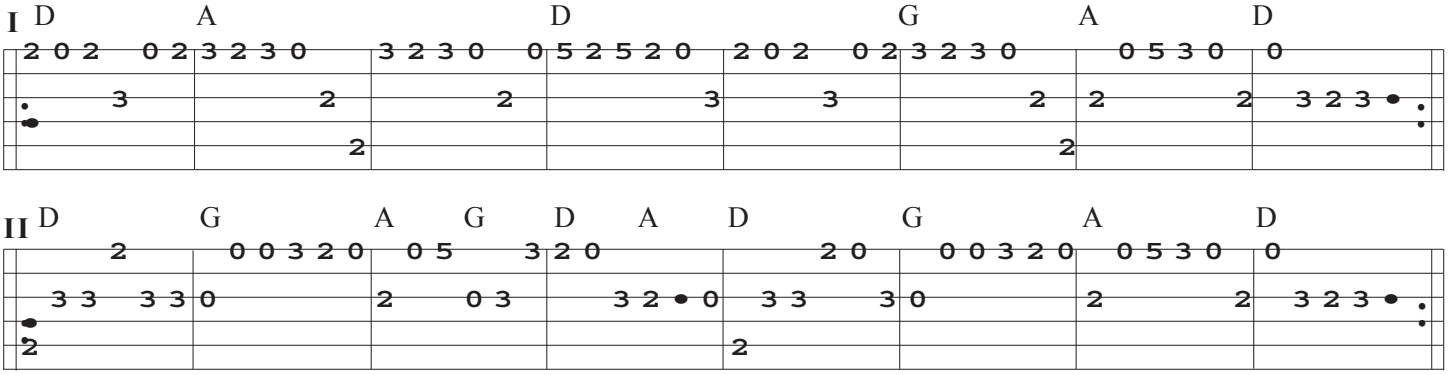
BACHELOR JIG

KEY: A



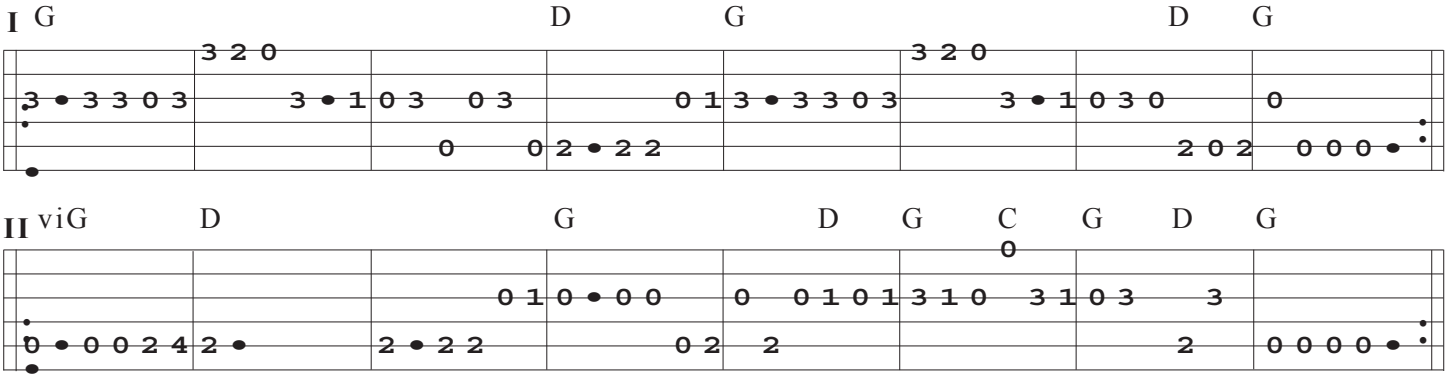
BESSIE BROWN

KEY: D



BONNIE DUNDEE

KEY: G



My Time in Nashville: 1971—Vibrant recollections of an era long gone

I moved to Nashville in the fall of 1971. I had, for the past six months, been playing banjo and guitar in a band at a tourist theater near Harrison, Arkansas. My friend John Hadley scooped me up on his way from Oklahoma, and we were off, he in his big white panel van and me in my yellow VW bug. John was on sabbatical from the University of Oklahoma and was going to Nashville to sell songs (which he did, and continues to do to this day) and I was going for no clear reason.

We rented both sides of a duplex on the north end of town near Old Hickory in a DuPont company town called Rayon City. We lived on Rayon Drive. One house down from us was our old friend Alan Munde. He was playing with Jimmy Martin, and lived in a rooming house filled with people his grandfather's age.

I got a job as day-shift manager at a Pizza Hut on Dickerson Pike. James Monroe and his agent used to come in and sit and talk business. One day, Roland White came in for a pizza. I almost got arrested once when I was temporarily wrongly implicated in a serious bloody altercation between a gang of carpenters that hung out at the Hut and the kitchen crew of the Big Boy next door.

There were very few bluegrass venues then, and, for that matter, few venues at all. There was a little dive down on the river where Alan and Roland and others would play, and there was Earl Snead's Bluegrass Inn. One place I used to play was called the Mucky Ducky. I played some bar gigs with "Ranger" Doug Green, who liked cowboy music even back then.

Ground was about to be broken for Opryland, but the Ryman still ruled. The week of the DJ Convention, there was a Friday afternoon "Early Bird" bluegrass concert there. I went with Alan, who was playing there with Martin. (He came over to my place beforehand to change strings and to warm up, which, for a gig with Martin, meant playing along note for note with Martin's "Big and Country" instrumental album.)

When we got to the Ryman, Alan introduced me to John McEuen, who sat with me during the show. In addition to seeing, live for the first time, Monroe, Flatt, Scruggs, Jim and Jesse, Ralph Stanley, the Osbornes and the Country Gentlemen, I was regaled with the recent experiences of McEuen, who was at that time recording the "Circle" album with the people I was watching on stage.

Then, the night of that same day, I went to the Bluegrass Inn for what might have been the first gig by the Newgrass Revival. Norman Blake joined them for a set.

GTR and Cotton's were the main acoustic stores in town. On the wall by the door at GTR was an index card inscribed: "Guitar lessons, $5.00, Norman Blake" and a phone number.

John Hadley had a Vega Osborne model banjo he wanted to sell, so he put an ad in *The Tennessean*. George Gruhn, one-third owner of GTR, came out on a city bus, pulled $225 cash from a leather pouch hanging off his belt, and got back on the next bus with the banjo.

One morning, I went downdown, and there were Ernest Tubb and Roy Acuff, Tubb standing in front of his record shop and Acuff in front of his museum. They were cordially chatting across the street like small-town merchants.

My time in Nashville effectively ended when Alan got a call from a road warrior named Chance Fallon (he used the *nom d'etage* Marvin Muffnuckle), who was looking for a lead guitarist. Alan had recently left Martin, and was about to take the job when Byron Berline called from the West Coast to say that Country Gazette had gotten a recording contract. Alan was outtathere, and I joined Fallon on the road in Ft Dodge, Iowa.

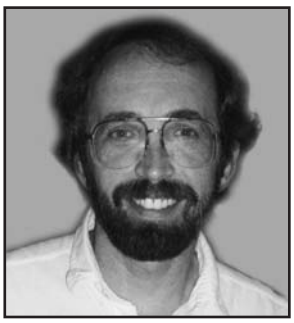
I was seldom in Nashville after that, essentially living on the road, and I eventually gave up the duplex on Rayon Drive.

When James Monroe would come into the Pizza Hut where Adam worked, he'd put an eight-track tape of the elder Monroe on the house sound system. Monroe never reacted. Was he flattered that Adam recognized him? Was he wondering why Adam wasn't playing any of his *music? (Explanation: He didn't have any James Monroe eight-tracks tapes). Was he irritated that Adam played his dad's music? If Adam ever meets James Monroe, he'll ask him. . .*

Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

Clarence White Classics

by Steve Pottier



Chug-A-Lug

As I discussed in my last column, downstrokes and in particular rest strokes can be an important technique for playing breaks in a bluegrass band. Here is a classic solo by Clarence White on the Roger Miller song "Chug-a-Lug." This recording is available on Sierra Records' Living in the Past. It's played on the record out of G, capoed at the 2nd fret. Metronome is about 90, but for this song I like to hear the clicks on both the bass note and the strum, so I set it for 180 for practice.

Some particular points to note:

1) Compare Clarence's solo with Roger Bush's vocal. Although it sounds slippery and bluesy, the solo doesn't stray far from the vocal.

2) The solo is almost entirely downstrokes, with liberal use of rest stroke pairs (as per the last column).

3) The opening run is a variation of a run from Clarence's solo on "I Am a Pilgrim," recorded maybe a year or two before he started performing this song.

4) M4 and M5 look like you should be using some up strokes. Don't. It needs to be paired downstroke- rest strokes whenever possible. This lick is also found in "Pilgrim" but used in a totally different way, this time landing on a D with a flatted 3rd (F note on the second string) instead of the context of a G7. The minor 3rd definitely gives it a bluesy feel.

5) M6 starts with a double hammer on, repeated later in the solo. You can also hear Clarence use this in his backup. The rhythm in the musical notation looks complicated, but you should be able to get a good grasp of the timing by listening and copying.

6) Notice how the slides in M9-10 are notes out of a D chord going to a D7. Letting the 3rd string slides ring while you play notes on the second string is a neat effect.

7) Use your third finger to start the slide in M12, then hammer on with the first and second fingers. This is an unusual combination, but very powerful.

8) Just hold a D chord for M13, lifting up briefly to get the open notes.

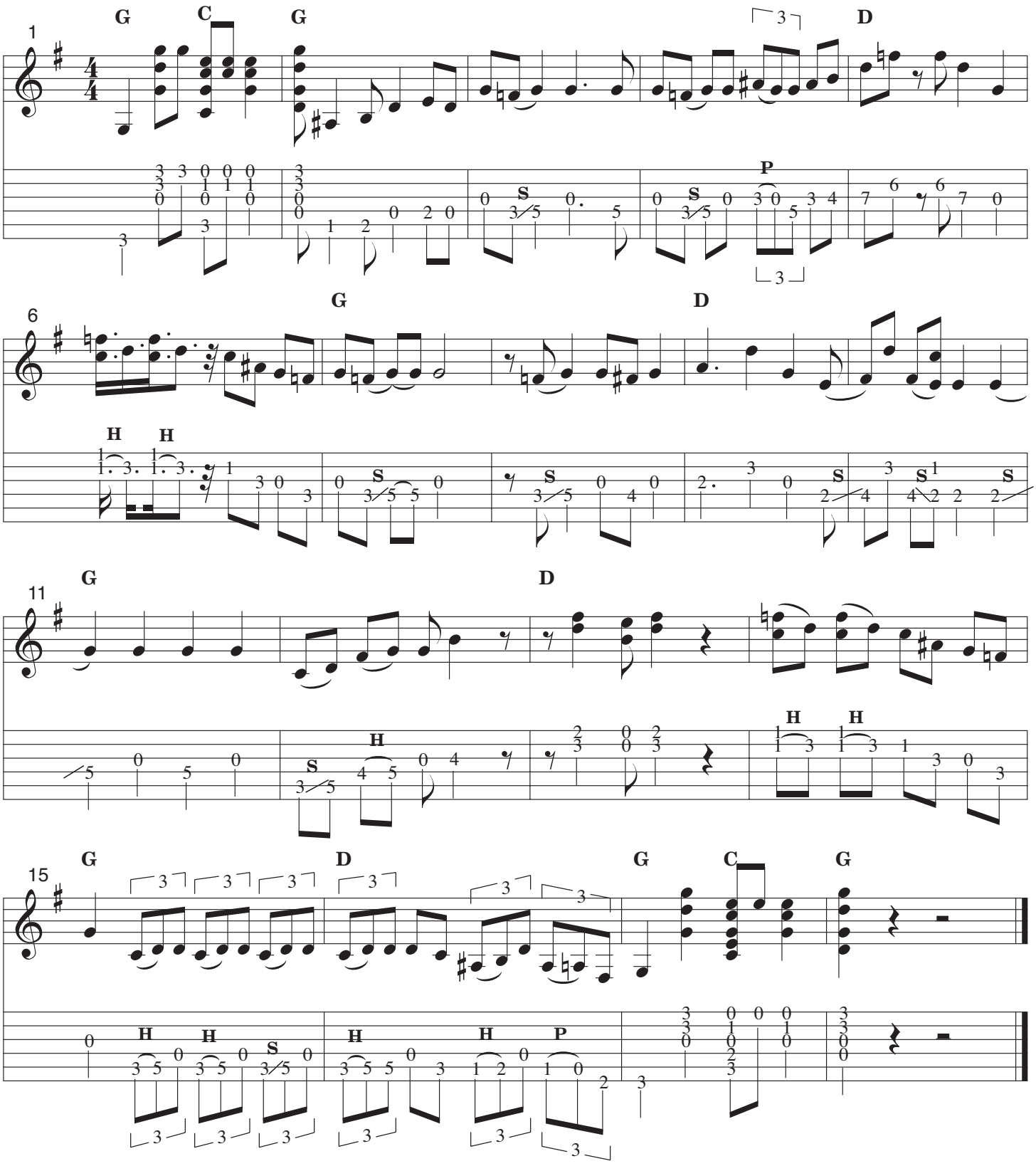
9) M 15 has some triplet hammer-ons, Just play down on the hammer and up on the 4th string.

10) The break ends with a signature Clarence White triplet hammer-on/pull-off combination.

If you get this break down, try working out the second break, with the opening melody note on the low string.

Audio CD
Track 49

Chug-A-Lug

Arranged by Steve Pottier

John Jorgenson as Django Reinhardt

In almost every style of music where the guitar is prominent, John Jorgenson has not only mastered the style but has also been recognized as one of its "guitar heroes." Guitarists from the rock, country, bluegrass, folk, and Gypsy jazz genres all look to John Jorgenson as one of prominent guitarists in their field of specialty. You only need look at the list of people John has performed with and recorded with (printed, in part, in the Sept/Oct 2002 [Vol6, No6] issue of FGM) to recognize John's prominence in the guitar world. The thing that most impresses me about John Jorgenson, however, is not his virtuosity on the guitar but the infectious enthusiasm he has for the instrument. The level of excitement John maintains when talking about the guitar and guitar music is refreshing and rare for someone of his experience, skill level, and status.

John's level of excitement and enthusiasm for Gypsy jazz reached an all-time high recently when he was called on to play the role of Django Reinhardt in the soon-to-be-released major motion picture *Head In The Clouds*. The film, which stars Penelope Cruz and Charlize Theron, is set in Paris in the 1930s. During one scene the two main characters are dancing seductively in a club. In order to give the scene the look and feel of a Paris club in the 1930s, the director elected to have the Quintette du Hot Club de France providing the music. Not only was John Jorgenson selected to play the part of Django in the movie, he also transcribed all of the parts from recordings of the Hot Club from that era and, along with Andy McKenzie, played the guitar parts on the soundtrack. I met with John at his home in Nashville in May of 2003 and asked him about his experience playing the role of his guitar hero Django Reinhardt.

John explained, "The film is set in Paris during the 30s. The director John Duigan wanted to use two tracks from the Quintet of the Hot Club of France. Scottpatrick Siletto, the music supervisor, didn't think that the original tracks could be made to match the fidelity of the newly recorded dialogue and soundtrack, so he convinced the director that the tracks needed to be rerecorded. Scottpatrick called *Guitar Player Magazine* and asked who they would recommend to rerecord this music and the editor Micheal Molenda recommended me. Scottpatrick called me to see if I was up for recreating a couple QHCF tracks and I said, 'Yes, I think I could do this.' I sent him some examples of my Gypsy jazz playing and the director listened to it and said, 'Yes, I think this guy can do what we want.' The songs they choose were 'Blue Drag' from 1935 and 'Minor Swing' from 1937."

Originally John selected Andy Leftwich to play Grappelli's part and Bryan Sutton and Andy McKenzie (a friend from England) to play the rhythm guitar parts. After setting up a session to record the two songs in Nashville, problems arose with Canadian content laws. The film was being shot in Canada and evidently, by contract, the film could only employ a certain number of Americans. The film's producers told John that he would have to come up to Canada to record and had to use Canadian musicians. Since Andy McKenzie was British, John talked the musical director into letting Andy play one of the rhythm guitar parts, however, the other musicians could not be Americans.

The first step in the process was to transcribe the Hot Club's recordings of these two songs note-for-note. John said, "Andy had already transcribed some of the stuff and I had already learned Django's solos. 'Blue Drag' was the first Django solo that I had ever tried to learn twenty-some years ago." Even though both Andy and John were intimately familiar with the Hot Club's work on these songs, John said, "'Minor Swing' is like eight choruses long, four guitar and four fiddle. It wasn't a question of just writing down the intro and the outro. It was every single note, even notes that might be perceived as wrong notes, or whatever. We also had to transcribe the bass parts and 'Blue Drag' was harder for the bass because there are actually wrong notes in the bass part. And the chords are a little bit strange because they change at odd times. We went through the rhythm guitar parts the same way. In 'Minor Swing' at the end of every chorus the turnaround is just a little bit different with the rhythm. Sometimes they do an F7 to an E7, sometimes they do an E7, and there are different rhythms on them. On 'Blue Drag' one of the rhythm guitars plays pretty much a closed chord quarter note rhythm part and the other one plays almost more like a bluegrass rhythm part, where there is a ringing bass note and bass runs with a chord."

After accomplishing the tedious job of transcribing all the guitar and bass parts, John and Andy went to Canada and met with the musical director, Jean Robitaille,

Filming the club scene for *Head In The Clouds*

in his studio. The first thing they did was put the original tracks on the computer. John explains, "We did that because the tempo of those tracks was not consistent. When we reproduced the original tracks we wanted it to speed up the same amount, so we first put the original track on the computer and played rhythm guitars to that. Then a bass player was brought in. He was a good bass player, but he wasn't too familiar with this style. He was more of a modern jazz player. I asked him to pull the strings a certain way and not let the notes sustain so much and he was able to put all of the bass parts down except for the slapping sections. He had a really hard time with slapping and his bass wasn't set up for it either. Finally I said, 'I know that this may sound kind of insulting, but I'm going to need to have you let me use your bass and I'll put the slapping part on there.' I used to play bass in a rockabilly band and so I knew how to do the slapping part."

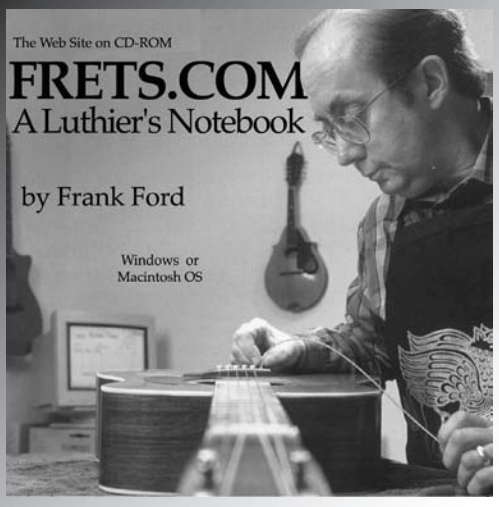
In addition to their intense study and analysis of the music, John and Andy also studied a lot of photos of the band from that era to see what kind of instrumentation they were using at that time period. John said, "There are photos of Joseph Reinhardt during that period where he is playing a classical Selmer and Andy owns an original classical Selmer, so he brought that. On 'Minor Swing' he played on the classical Selmer and I played my twelve-fret Ibenez steel string D-hole model. It sounded just like the rhythm sounded on the original record. On 'Blue Drag' Andy played my Ibenez for the rhythm and I played the more bluegrassy part on my Selmer, so it was different casting for the various rhythm guitar parts."

After laying down the bass and rhythm guitar parts, the next task was to find someone to play Grappelli's fiddle parts. John said, "The guy that the musical director really wanted to use was a Canadian named Stephane Allard who had won a Grappelli violin contest at one time. However, he was in Atlanta at the time and we really needed to get this done quickly, as we needed these tracks to lip sync to during the filming. We started working on the recording on Wednesday and the filming was going to be on Saturday." Eventually, technology solved the problem.

John said, "I put some of my lead onto the rhythm tracks and we made an mp3 and sent it to this guy in Atlanta. He put Grappelli's solo on mp3, but somehow they were not able to send it back to us. We were waiting and waiting and never got it. So we did it again and he went into another studio and did his part again. When he sent that to us, it was almost a whole step too high and much too fast. Something had happened in the conversion with the sampling rate. So we resent it once again at a different sampling rate and then we finally did get it the right way. In the meantime I used my 1942 Selmer, with some well-worn Argentine strings and a Wegen pick, and a vintage RCA ribbon mic and finished up the lead guitar parts. The combination of the guitar with that mic was great, especially as I ran it through the Groove Tube Vipre preamp, which really allows the RCA to open up and give its full fidelity."

In order to further add to the authenticity of the recording and the filming, John played his parts with two fingers as Django necessarily had to do. After all of the parts were complete, John and the engineers went in and did an A-to-B matching of the mix with the original recording to get the mix of the instruments to sound identical to the original. John said, "We turned the recordings into the producers to see if they were happy and they couldn't believe that it sounded so much like the original recording."

With the recording complete, the next task was to film the scene. As soon as John was ired for the job he had begun to grow his mustache. He said, "Little by little I was trimming it and looking at all of the pictures of Django from the time period. Django's mustache would change shapes;



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sometimes it was straight across and other times it would go down. I was also looking at pictures of his hair from that time period."

By the time John got to Canada he had grown the mustache and had tinted his eyebrows black. A couple of days before the shooting he also dyed his hair black. Early in the morning on the day of the shoot the film's hair stylist cut John's hair, using photos of Django as a guide. John said, "He did a great job. He did it just exactly like the pictures of Django. Meanwhile, on either side of me in this makeup trailer are Charlize Theron and Penelope Cruz having their makeup done. I brought in a CD of Django and they put it on in the makeup trailer and everyone was listening to it."

After John's hair was made to look like Django, the makeup artist studied the photos of Django's left hand that John had brought and began transforming John's hand into a burn-scarred hand that resembled Django's. John said, "She started painting this gluey stuff on my hand and as it would dry it would draw up the skin. She knew just the way to do it to make it look like the picture. She applied that three or four times and then started putting makeup over that stuff. The final thing looked really good. She was able to make it look nearly perfect. Then she put spirit gum on the inside of my fingers to hold them in position."

After makeup, John and the rest of the mock Quintet went to wardrobe. John said, "They had taken a photo of the Quintet from 1938 in London when they were all wearing white dinner jackets and matched our costumes to that. The women in wardrobe were really into their job. They had me try on a lot of different shirts, bow ties, dinner jackets, pants, and shoes until they got it to look just right. I asked them if I could wear red socks because there is a story about Django liking to wear bright red socks with his tuxedo. They thought that was cool. We tried to put as many of those realistic things in there as we could."

After wardrobe, the band went over to a club in Montreal where they were to shoot the scene. The club was full of extras dressed in 30s clothes and on each table was a table card that announced the Hot Club of France as providing the evening's entertainment. John said, "The attention to detail was amazing." In addition to John and Andy, the other musicians on the shoot were Django enthusiasts who fit the various parts, including Django Montreal webmaster Francois Rousseau. John said, "Everybody had the right look and they were all musicians who were capable of playing that music."

Regarding the scene itself, John said, "This is a pivotal scene. The characters were a couple at one point and separated because one of them fell in love with a political activist from Spain. This scene was the first time they had seen each other since they broke up. So it is kind of melancholy, kind of sexy, and emotionally an important scene." John said that during the scene close-ups of he and the band were shot in order to capture the band's reaction to these two women's seductive dance.

The shoot ended at about eight that evening, just enough time for John to put away his guitar and rush to a local Montreal club to see Bireli Lagrene. However, he did not have time to changed out of wardrobe. John said, "Bireli was shocked to see how I looked. He said, 'Oh my God! Look at you!' He was really interested in the film and was checking out the makeup on my hand. His show was phenomenal. To me, he is just the best. Seeing him play to an appreciative audience of 1500 people was the perfect way to end a great day."

John's experience of playing Django in the movie has inspired him in many different ways. He said, "The energy of that is still propelling. I was already working on a Gypsy style CD, but the work on the film is making me really want to do a tribute to Django where the band plays the arrangements note-for-note. It would be great for people to see that live. People go and see Beatles tribute bands, so why not a QHCF tribute band? I love that music and part of what I like about it is the arrangements and the rhythm and the whole thing. Most of the time when people play these songs now they are treated more like standard jazz tunes and they play the song, jam on the changes, and then end it. The Quintet had so many cool arrangements and such great interplay between Stephane and Django, it would be a lot of fun to play those arrangements live."

Jorgenson's "Djangoized" Hand

John is currently working to finish his new Gypsy jazz recording that features string arrangements played by the Nashville Chamber Orchestra and John on clarinet as well as guitar. Almost all of the music on the CD is original. However, the producers of Head In The Clouds have given the OK for John to include the two tracks from the movie as bonus tracks on his CD. This new CD should be out soon. We'll keep you posted.

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John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Strong Fundamentals #5: Lady Be Good

Some bluegrass players like to expand their playing into the realm of swing. There are lots of great swing tunes that make the jam session rounds, and "Lady Be Good" is one of them. It's a good tune for making the transition from bluegrass, because it's in G and has a basic I-IV-V progression in its "raw form." By adding some connecting chords and inversions, we can take a simple progression and flesh it out to have a bit more movement. I have written the basic "bluegrass" chords for the tune, and the first half of the swing progression.

Unlike most fiddle tunes (which have an AABB form), the classic jazz 32-bar progression follows the form AABA. You need to keep track of where the last A ends the form and the next full time through the tune ("chorus") begins.

Like last issue's "Grey Eagle," you'll find the chords are closed position, and played in the Texas-approved "sock style." "G/B" means a G chord with a B in the bass. Listen for the bass line movement and how the diminished chords are used as chromatic connective tissue between voicings. Next issue, I will finish the chord progression from the bridge on. These voicings should keep your hands full until then!

John McGann lives and performs in Boston MA. He is a member of The Wayfaring Strangers (new CD due in the fall on Rounder), Joe Derrane (new CD due in the fall on MapleShade), Rust Farm, and many other bands, depending on who else can't show up. He can also figure out tunes and solos for you- check http://www.johnmcgann.com for details.

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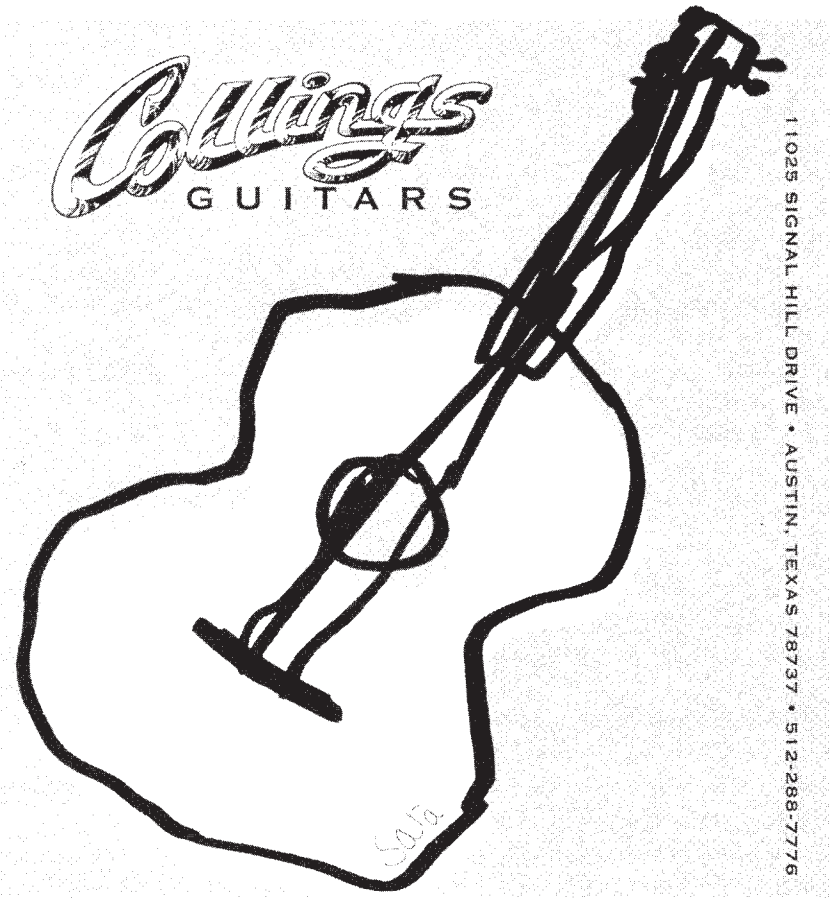
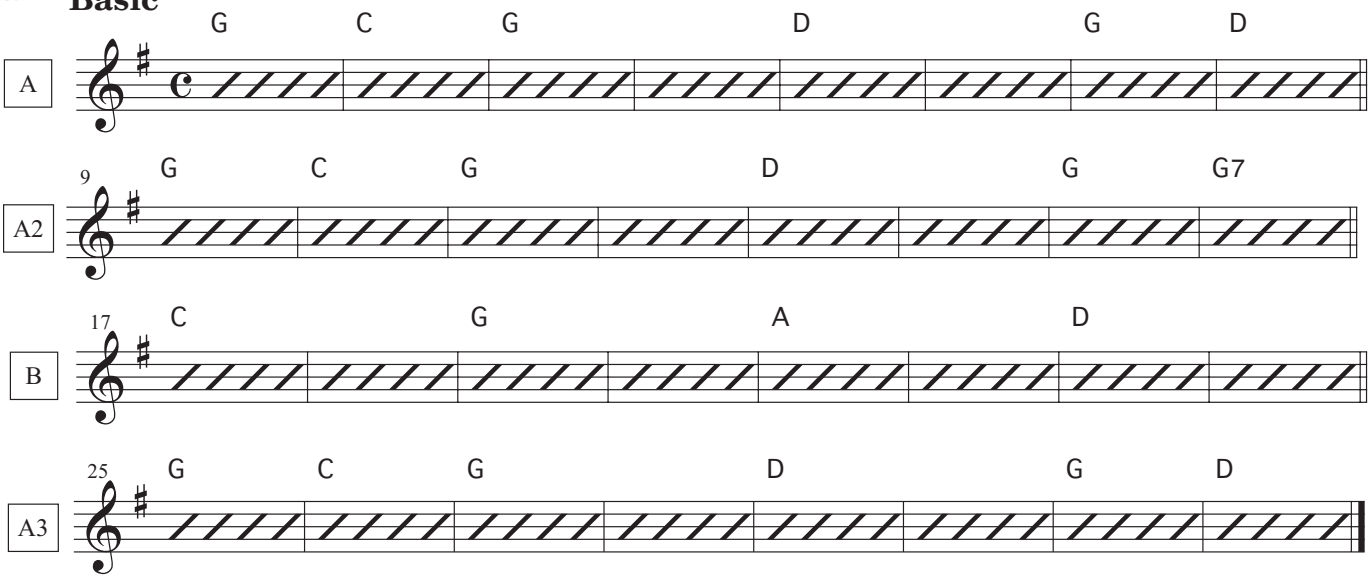


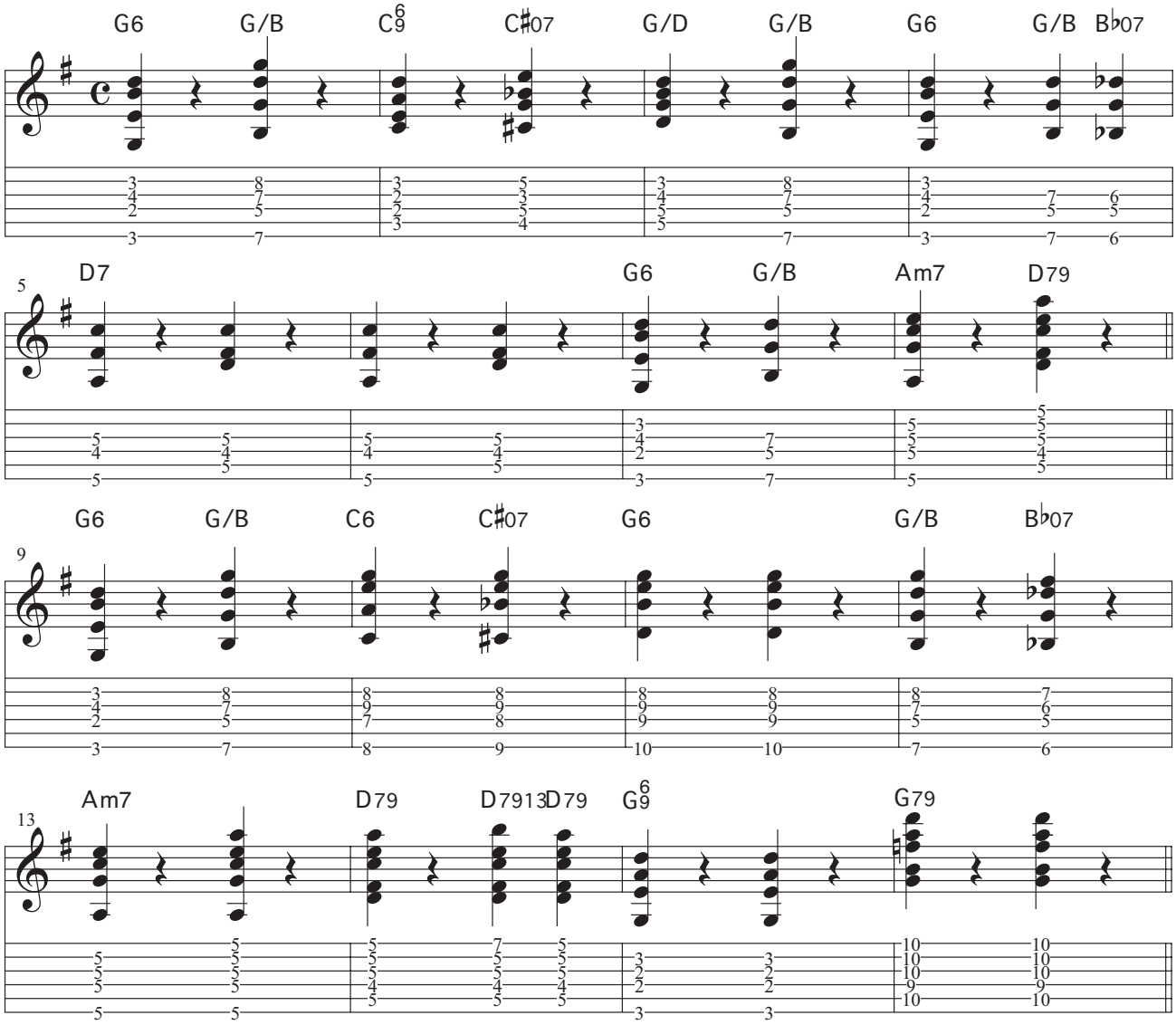
Audio CD
Tracks 51

Lady Be Good - Rhythm

Arranged by John McGann

Basic



Swing Chords

New Release Highlight
Edward O'Day and Daybreak: First Light

by Dan Miller

A lot of great CDs come across my desk in the course of a month. We probably average 5 new releases a week being sent in for possible review in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. I listen to them all in order to determine suitability for review. When I opened the press package sent to me by the band Daybreak I did not know anything about them. After listening to the first few songs on *First Light*, I immediately wanted to know more. This music is fresh and different. It has a traditional foundation that appeals to my traditional tastes, it displays a groove that captures the rhythmic resonance of my body, and it displays a degree of heart and soul that allows me to feel the music as much as hear it. It is one of the best all-around recordings that has come across my desk in a long time. My first thought after hearing this CD was, "I have to feature this CD in the magazine. People need to know about this band."

Daybreak is a four-piece ensemble from Nashville, Tennessee. The instrumentation consists of fiddle (DeAnn Whalen), guitar (Edward O'Day), bass (Dan Immel), and Dobro (Brad Talley). The first track "Fast Legs" immediately reveals the band's Celtic influence. O'Day takes a few very impressive solos here. His playing on this tune reminds me of the fluidity, inventiveness, and clarity of Scott Nygaard.

On the second cut "Newground Breakdown" the band announces, "We can play bluegrass." But even this hard-driving breakdown has a bit of Celtic flavoring in its rhythm. The band is indeed breaking newground in this breakdown. The third cut, Jim McNeil's "Catch Me When I Fall" reveals fiddle player DeAnn Whalen's strong and clear voice. The band demonstrates that they can successfully accompany heartfelt and soulful lyrics. After the third cut, I'm hooked. These guys are good! And as a guitar enthusiast, I'm wondering "Who is this guy Edward O'Day?" I listen some more.

The fourth song "Paul Revere's Ride" is a contemporary instrumental akin to something I would expect to hear from Nickel Creek. I'm thinking, "Is there anything that this band can't do?" All of O'Day's solos

are tasteful, strong, and clear. I'm still thinking Scott Nygaard. I'm also becoming more and more impressed with O'Day's rhythm playing. Very strong, very confidant. This band is going places and Edward O'Day is the one who is driving them.

With each cut I become more impressed with the band's versatility and tasteful arrangements. Cut five, "Mending Wall" is a slow haunting tune that sounds as though it is drifting off a misty lake nestled in the Irish countryside. Cut six is another contemporary sounding instrumental. Seven, a rollicking Celtic number; eight is a bouncy modern sounding number that swings, slows, romps, stomps, and gets funky. On cut nine, the traditional "Down By the Salley Gardens" DeAnn's voice floats atop Edwards pulsing rhythm in a way that inspires me to close my eyes and float along. Cut ten, written by O'Day, is the tune he chose to feature in this issue's audio companion. Listen to this one yourself and you'll get a taste of what I've been talking about here.

Cut eleven, 'Deep River," is an a capella number that reveals that the rest of this band can sing right along with DeAnn's lead. In the liner notes the final cut "Terra Blue" is listed as being "Daybreak's anthem." It's combination of Celtic rhythm, solid groove, bluegrass instrumentation, and tasteful arrangement certainly does reflect what this band represents. Guitarist Edward O'Day describes the band as "progressive, but rooted in tradition." I would agree. First Light is masterfully produced by Nashville veteran producer and engineer Bill VornDick.

At the end of listening to this disc, I listen again, and then again. I'm excited. I'm ready to tell the world about this band that I have just discovered. However, further research told me that they are booked to play at Northern California's Strawberry Festival, the Grey Fox festival in upstate New York, and at the Walnut Valley in Winfield, Kansas. Additionally, they are scheduled to showcase at this year's IBMA convention and they are opening dates for the Jerry Douglas Band and Tommy Emmanuel. Evidently the world already knows about Daybreak!

OK, so the world is already waking up to Daybreak, as it should. It is my job to introduce readers of this magazine to its guitarist because you will all be hearing a lot more about Edward O'Day in years to come. You might as well start now.

Edward O'Day is a twenty-eight year old native of Nashville, Tennessee. He started playing guitar when he was fifteen. Although he started on the acoustic guitar, he quickly set it down when he got his first electric guitar and spent the majority of his musical life during his high school and college years playing electric guitar in rock bands.

When Edward was 23 he went back to school (having already earned a BS in Communications) to study music, saying, "I wanted to take it seriously." During the first year of music school he was introduced to a lot of jazz. His roommate owned a copy of the first David Grisman Quintet album on vinyl. Edward said, "Grisman floored me. I was enamored with his music and did a U-turn."

The introduction to Grisman motivated Edward to once again pick up the acoustic guitar and he has not looked back. He said, "The way I always played and heard things on the guitar brought me back to the acoustic. It made more sense to me and I realized that is what I was supposed to be doing. The electric was fun but it is not as intimate, natural, or real. There is a chemistry with the acoustic guitar that is personal. There is a direct connection between you and the instrument."

The interest in the acoustic guitar also led Edward to sign up for bluegrass ensemble classes at school with Raymond McLain.

Edward said, "Raymond taught everything from the Carter Family to how to play with fiddles and banjos, to the importance of taste, tone, and timing in the bluegrass context." Exploration of bluegrass guitar also exposed him to flatpickers who began to influence his playing style. He particular points to players like David Grier, Russ Barenberg, and Scott Nygaard as being influential. He says, "I like their playful styles. I like that they can take breaks for days and come up with so many different interpretations of the melody."

In addition to guitar players, Edward also lists Mark O'Connor, Bela Fleck, Stuart Duncan and Jerry Douglas as influences. He says, "I like to understand style and articulation. I want to break it down and understand where they are coming from and get their view of it. With instruments other than guitar there are things that they can do harmonically with the melody that is different. I like to try and bridge the gap between their instruments and the guitar. I want to create my own style. I don't want to be a clone. I like to take chances. I like to go in the moment and see what I can create."

Listening to Daybreak it is evident that Edward has spent a lot of time working on rhythm guitar. In part this is due to the Celtic influence of players like John Doyle and Tony McManus, but Edward also says that it also comes from the band working hard to tighten up their sound. He says, "When we formed this band we decided that we were going to take it seriously, like a full time job. When we are not on the road, we are rehearsing. We rehearse for about three to four hours a day. We work with a metronome, we record our rehearsals to minidisc and listen back critically. Bands like Nickel Creek or the Flecktones are really tight. We are working hard to play as a unit. I think that in acoustic music the level of consistency is amazing. There is a very small margin of error that is acceptable. You have to be at that level."

Regarding the Celtic influence, Edward says, "Celtic rhythm is tough because it has a lift to it. Timing is crucial because of the syncopation and accenting. You have to be dead on to drive it. You have to be in the pocket. You have to play with a very loose wrist and when you are accenting, you have to be consistent. Everything has to be right on the money and you have to lock up with the bass player. The rhythm is everything. It is the character of the sound."

Edward O'Day impressed me as a serious guitar player who is dedicated to working hard to achieve success. You will be hearing more about him, and from him, in the future. If you are looking for something new, refreshing, and different, yet rooted in tradition, to add to your CD collection I highly recommend Daybreak's First Light.

The Gear: Edward O'Day currently plays a Santa Cruz Dreadnought guitar. He has also ordered—and is anxiously awaiting—an OM model from Marty Lanham's Nashville Guitar Company. Regarding sound reinforcement, Edward says, "I use a Presonus acoustic Q tube preamp/blender for my live sound. It is the most amazing new piece of gear for acoustic instruments. I am using the LR Baggs Dual Source in my guitar and then I run it into the acoustic Q. I encourage guitar players to try it. The tube makes the sound so natural and clean."

Tony Rice Product

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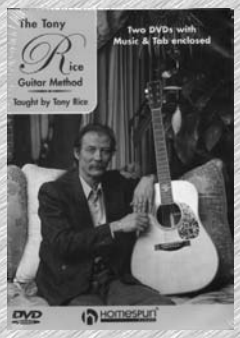

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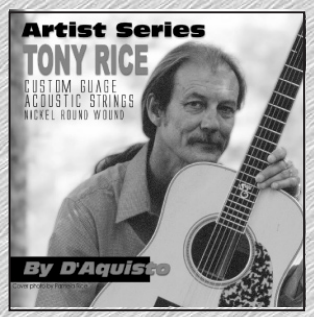
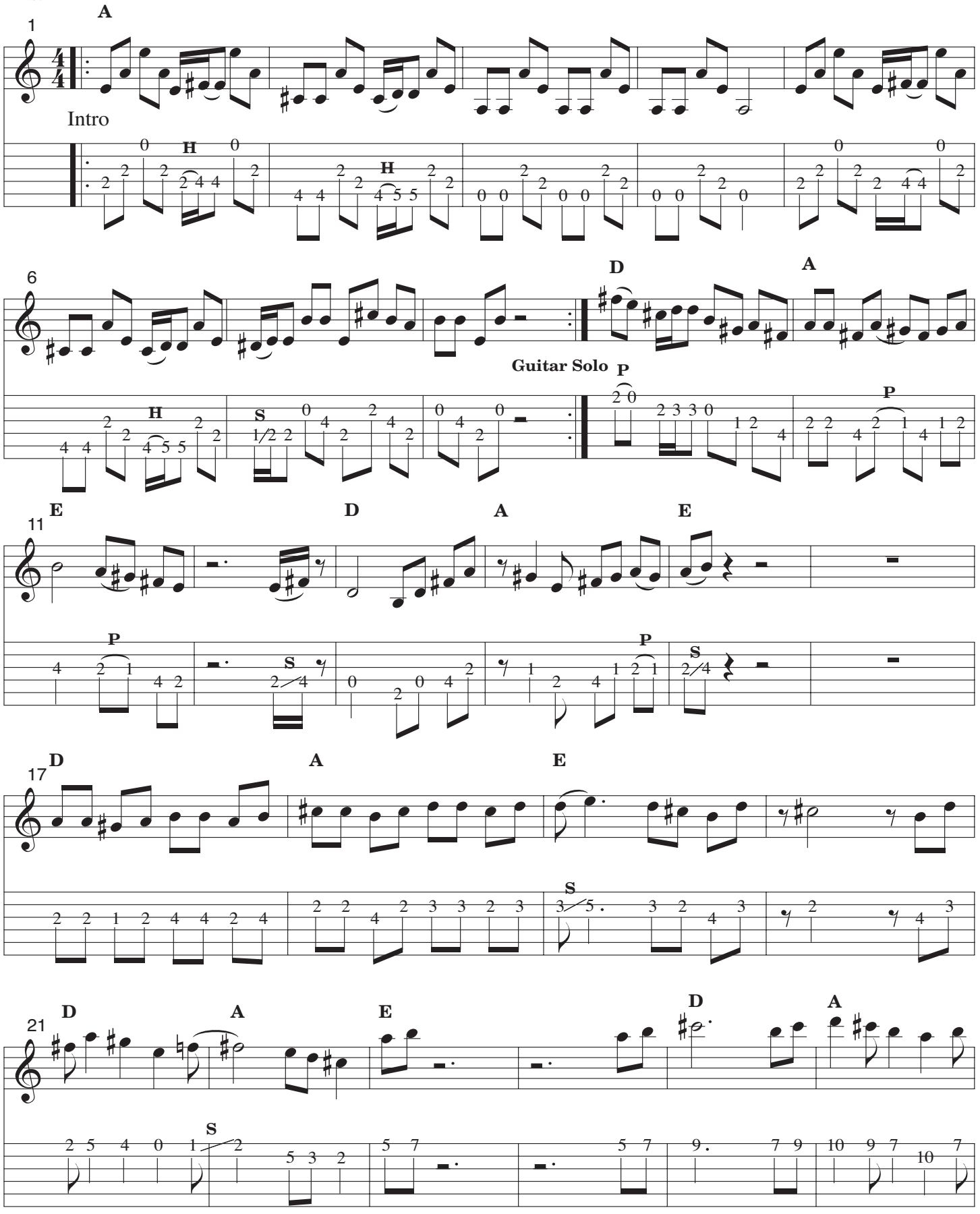
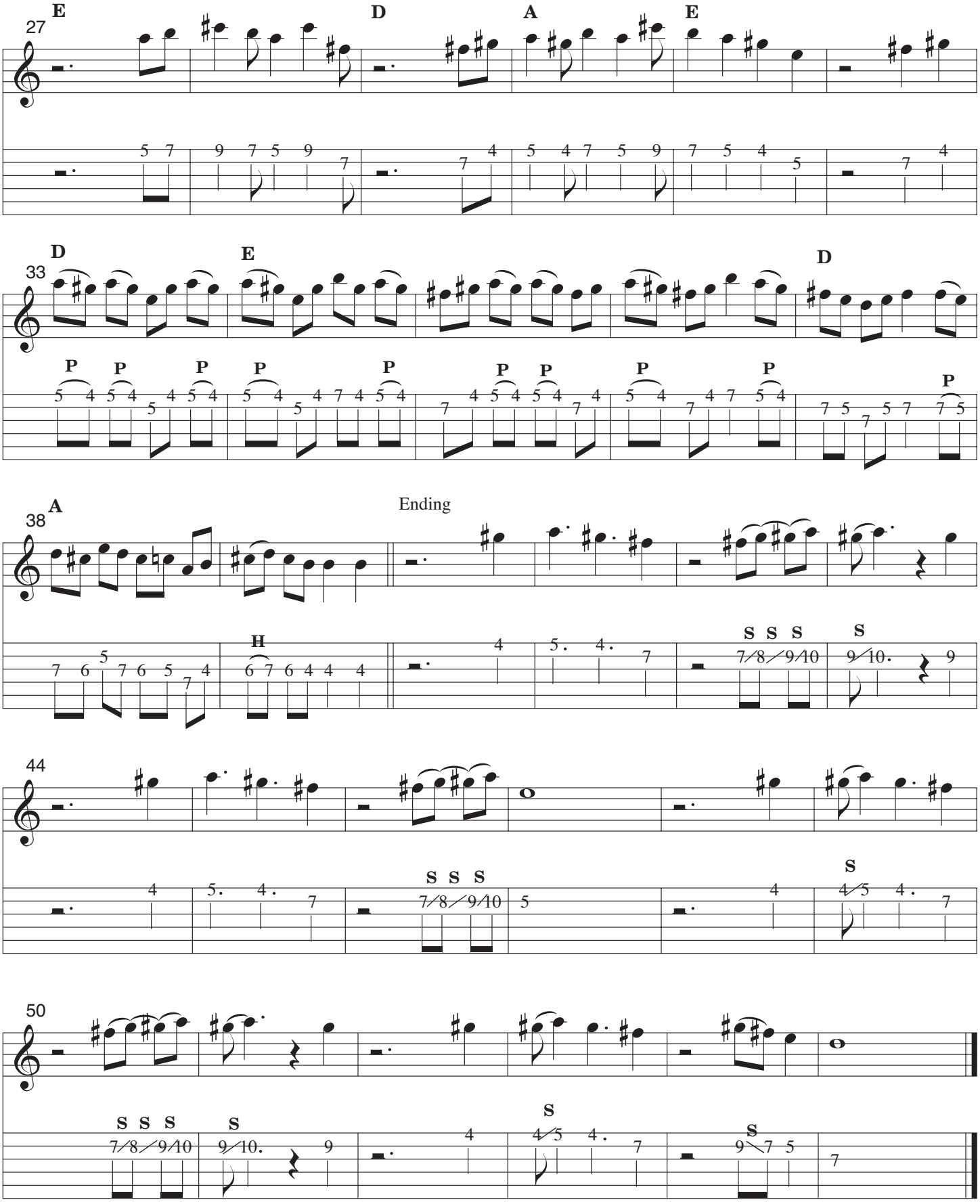


Audio CD
Track 52

Osmosis

Written by Edward O'Day
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Osmosis (con't)

Reviews

Bryan Sutton: Bluegrass Guitar

Reviewed by Chris Thiessen

It's everything you might expect and more. From the initial banjo-guitar duet opening for "Hangman's Reel," his lyrical touch with "High Heel Shoe" or "Beaumont Rag," the full-bore blaze of "Roanoke" or "Beaumont Rag," or his ability to masterfully handle slow tunes like "The Storms Are on the Ocean" or "Margaret's Waltz," Bryan Sutton reminds us once again why (at only 30) he's firmly set in the pantheon of astounding hot guitarists.

This time around he's focusing on bluegrass and traditional music. Only one tune ("Nelia's Dance") is a Sutton original. In fact, only two other tunes of this baker's dozen plus one are original compositions (Tim O'Brien's "The High Road" and Bela Fleck's "Whippersnapper"). But regardless of the tune's age, Bryan and his accompanists (Dennis Crouch on bass, Tim Crouch on fiddle, Tim O'Brien on mandolin, and David Talbot on banjo) work superbly together to create music that effectively showcases each other's artistic talents. This CD is just a delight. Put down the magazine and order it from your favorite CD vendor if you haven't already.

So, we can ask what's next for Mr. Sutton? Perhaps he and his buddy John Jorgenson will break new ground in Gypsy jazz with the Hot Club of Nashville. Sure – it won't be bluegrass, but with Bryan on the six-string, does it really matter? You might as well sign up now for pre-purchase on that CD as well. If you don't, you'll only regret it.

Song List: Hangman's Reel; Daley's Reel; The High Road; Big Sandy River; Back Up and Push; Margaret's Waltz; High Heel Shoe; Nelia's Dance; Whippersnapper; Roanoke; Beaumont Rag; The Storms Are on the Ocean

Two Recordings of the Same Name…

In 1970 a now-legendary flatpicker named Dan Crary released an LP titled *Bluegrass Guitar*. It was a benchmark recording in the emerging style, and Dan was one of its early proponents. Thirty-three years later another young turk of the flatpick takes up the torch and releases a CD, also titling it *Bluegrass Guitar*. Certainly, if another writer wrote a novel and called it *The Grapes of Wrath*, comparisons to Steinbeck would invariably emerge. And that's especially apparent when one tune – as "Big Sandy River" or "Cross the Big Sandy" - appears on both the Sutton and Crary CDs (respectively).

(Of course, we would be remiss not to mention Eric Thompson [featured in the Jan/Feb 2000 [Vol4, No 2] issue of FGM] and his similarly titled LP, originally released in 1978 and re-titled on its CD release in the late 90s as *Thompson's Real*. But we'll excuse it from this discussion for now. And in no way does this comparison of the Crary and Sutton CDs minimize the ground-breaking work of Clarence White and the Kentucky Colonels in the early 60s, Clarence's work with Eric Weissberg and Marshall Brickman in 1963, or the influence of Doc Watson, George Shuffler, Don Reno, Norman Blake, or other seminal guitarists. The Crary and Sutton CDs just provide an interesting way to look at the past 33 years in bluegrass guitar.)

At its release, Dan's *Bluegrass Guitar* LP was a radical benchmark of things to come. Crary (along with the personnel from Bluegrass Alliance) featured a lead guitar, front and center, in a bluegrass band, and audaciously demonstrated that the guitar was as versatile a lead instrument as mandolin or banjo. That recording threw down the gauntlet to all flatpickers, announcing that something was happening in the bluegrass world: an evolution in the role of the guitar beyond rhythm and an incidental lead.

Fast-forward 33 years. Bryan Sutton releases his second solo CD, *Bluegrass Guitar*, which focuses on bluegrass and traditional music. Within the context of a bluegrass band, Bryan weaves his guitar in and out of lead and supporting roles in the apparently effortless Sutton-esque style we've come to appreciate.

Over the three decades, what's changed? Certainly (and perhaps unfairly), the quality of recording improved tremendously. Crary has the feeling of a pioneer, working his way deftly through a dozen fiddle tunes in a new wilderness. On the other hand, Sutton's fluidity and artistic confidence is evident, demonstrating how ingrained —and accepted as natural—the flatpicker-as-lead has become in our guitar culture. In that perspective, Crary's work is even more remarkable, and perhaps more cutting-edge. The opportunity that we have to listen to these two CDs side-by-side should bring home to every person using a flatpick the debt we have to those artists who created an art form we simply accept. We are lucky, because we stand on the shoulders of giants.

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Guitar Review: Saga D250M

by John Jorgenson

As a long time fan and player of the gypsy jazz music created by Django Reinhardt in the 30's, I have always been fascinated with the instruments used to create that unique tone. I was lucky enough to find an original Selmer for sale back in the early 80's when I started my obsession with this music. Like all guitarists, one guitar (even a Selmer!) is never enough and I have bought, sold and traded many gypsy style guitars over the years, including a custom Dupont from France, CSLs from Japan, Hodsons from the UK... and being ever the curious enthusiast I have tried wonderful guitars built by Dell'Arte, Shelley Park, Leo Eimers, John LeVoi, Rob Aylward, Favino, Micheal Dunn, John Monteleone, Killy Nonis, Anastasio, etc. I consider myself lucky to have been able to try many fine examples of gypsy guitars. The one thing that has been missing has been a high quality gypsy jazz guitar at an affordable price-until now.

The Saga D250M is just an all-around great guitar, not even considering the price which puts it in reach of players who are just starting to learn gypsy jazz and players who want to have this particular tone in their acoustic arsenal. This instrument's design and dimensions were taken from a vintage Selmer, down to the unusual solid headstock and 3 ply back and sides which feature a stunning bird's eye maple veneer, just like the original. Where normally ply is considered less than desirable in a conventional flat top guitar, in a gypsy style guitar it is the first choice for authenticity and function for the back and sides. The top of the guitar is solid spruce, not carved or pressed but rather glued to radiused braces to give the top a property of being slightly stressed, which creates the responsive snap characteristic of properly built gypsy guitars. The soundhole is a "petit bouche", a small oval shape surrounded by a yellow and brown multi-layer rosette.

The neck meets the body at the 14 fret and is not too boaty, not too slim, nice and comfortable. Adjustable with a truss rod, this is an improvement over the original Selmers which had non-adjustable reinforcement rods imbedded in the neck. The ebony fingerboard features mother of pearl dots at the 5th, 7th, 10th (French style) 12th and 15th frets, and has smoothly finished medium sized frets which provide just enough room to grab the strings for bending. The tailpiece is the classic stamped brass Selmer style, able to accept ball and loop end strings and has an attractive black insert. The tuners are Waverly-style open tuners, and they work well especially after loosening the screws slightly and adding a drop of 3-in-1 oil.

All of the above is relatively meaningless if the guitar does not sound good-but this is the best part-the guitar sounds great! It was shipped to me set up with bronze strings which always sound harsh on these types of guitars , so I immediately put on a set of Argentines (10-46, silver plated copper-the style of strings that to my ears sound best on these guitars) that Saga had kindly provided. With the lighter strings now the action was way too low, so I had to shim the bridge, inserting ebony squares under the 2 feet of the middle section of the 3 piece bridge (again like the original Selmers, with a movable middle section between 2 fixed "moustache" pieces).
With the action suitably up I could now hear the incredible voice of this guitar. The bottom end was full and punchy, the mids clean and the treble not harsh but present. My true test of a guitar is if I want to keep playing it, and this guitar passed with flying colors. I even took it with me to Samois (the big Django festival in France) where I played it on a Ferris Wheel in Paris, in the campgrounds near the festival, in the airport in NYC, and it held it's own in many a jam session, with a lead tone audible over as many as 8 rhythm guitars all playing at once! I found myself half wishing I wasn't so close to being done with my new CD so I could use it on some cuts.

As you can tell, I do really like this guitar. I did make a few suggestions to Saga though. One was to ship the guitars out with the proper style strings (they don't have to be Argentines, other companies like John Pearse, Dell'Arte, Galli, and Lenzner make fine strings of this type) and to adjust the intonation on the bridges using these strings as well, as I had a little difficulty getting all 6 strings to be perfectly in tune up the neck with the current compensation. I also recommended that they ship the guitar out with 2 sets of shims, one already on the guitar for medium action, allowing the buyer to adjust the bridge up or down to his or her preference of string gauge and action (also allowing for the need to change from time to time due to climate). Aesthetically I would like to see the finish with a slight tint added, to bring out the bird's eye more, but that is a very minor thing and just personal taste. To Saga's credit they had already decided to adopt some of my suggestions, and the others they received willingly and plan to add on as soon as possible.

Players that are planning to use Stimer or De Armond magnetic pickups may run into a clearance problem depending on how the action is set, but there are companies that make very low-profile pickups, Miller from Switzerland for one.

The list price for the D250M is $949.00, also available is the D250 which has all the same appointments but features rosewood back and sides and a slotted headstock and lists for $895.00.

All in all this is a great value, and I am really glad that there is an affordable guitar of this type out there that is really a high quality instrument, well made with great tone. When I complimented my old friend and Saga designer Greg Rich on the guitar he repied "it doesn't cost that much more to do things right". The proof of that statement is found in the tone of the D250M.

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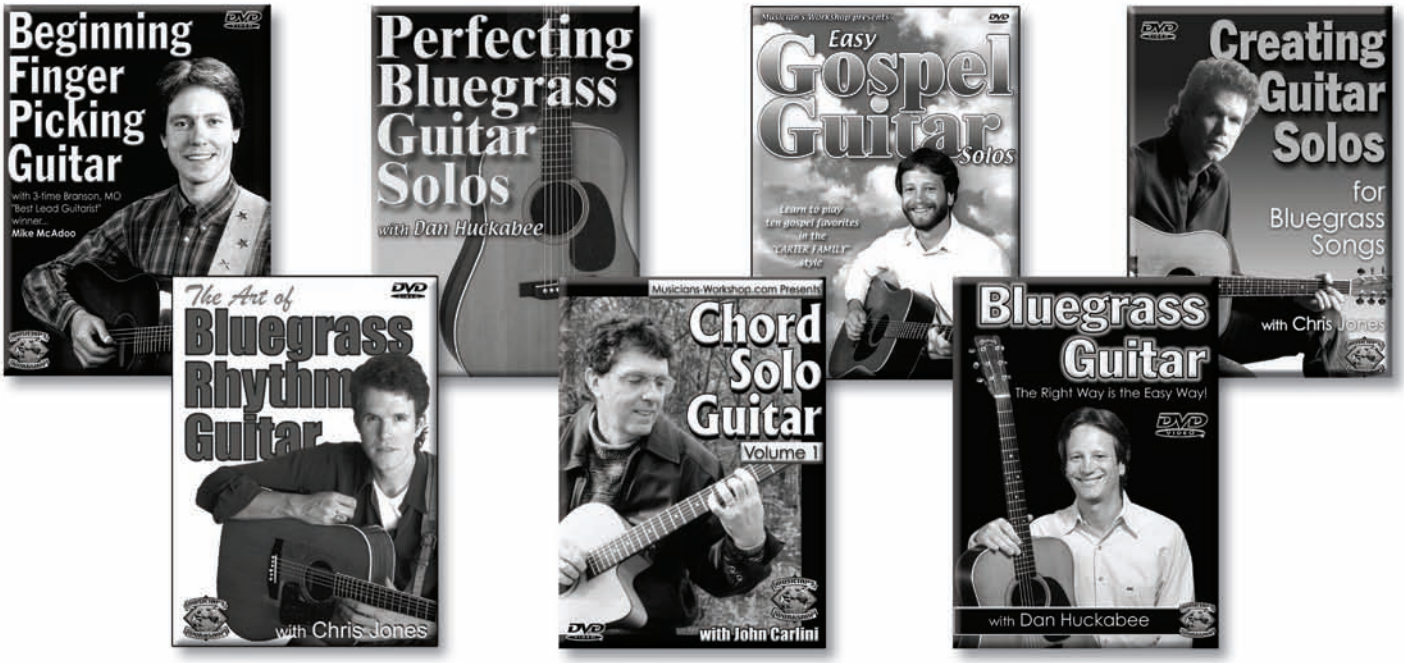
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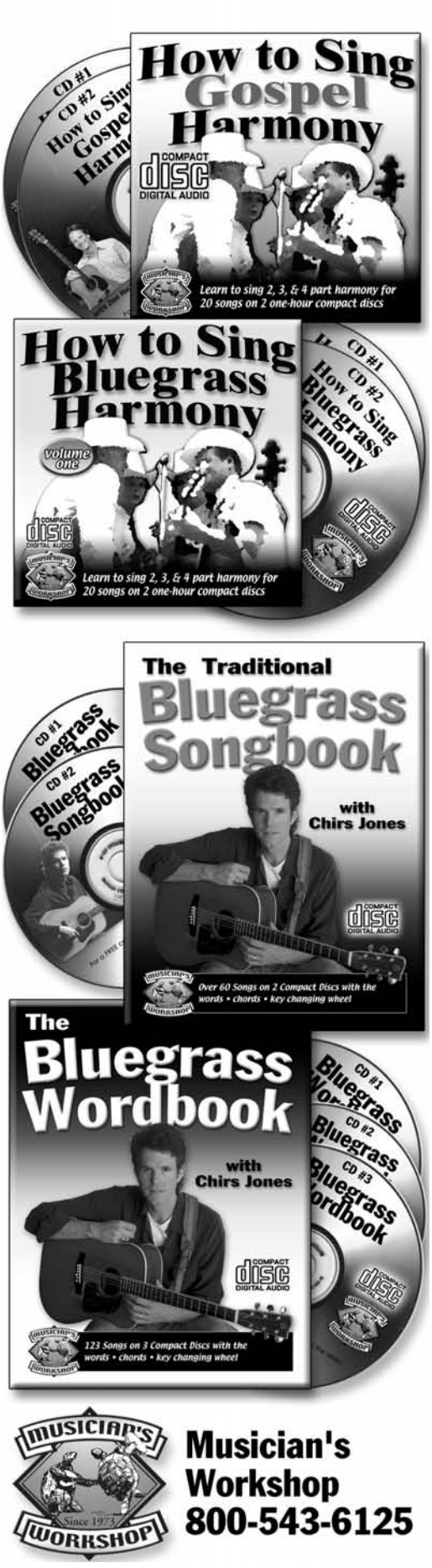
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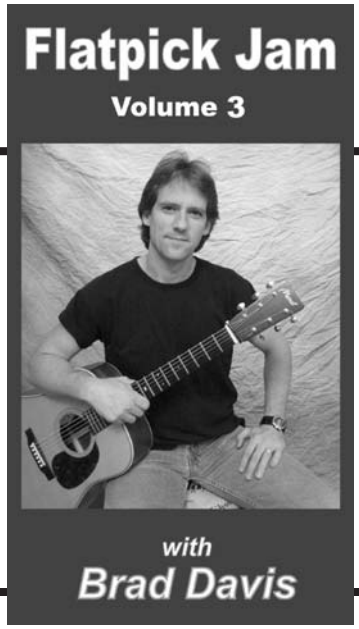

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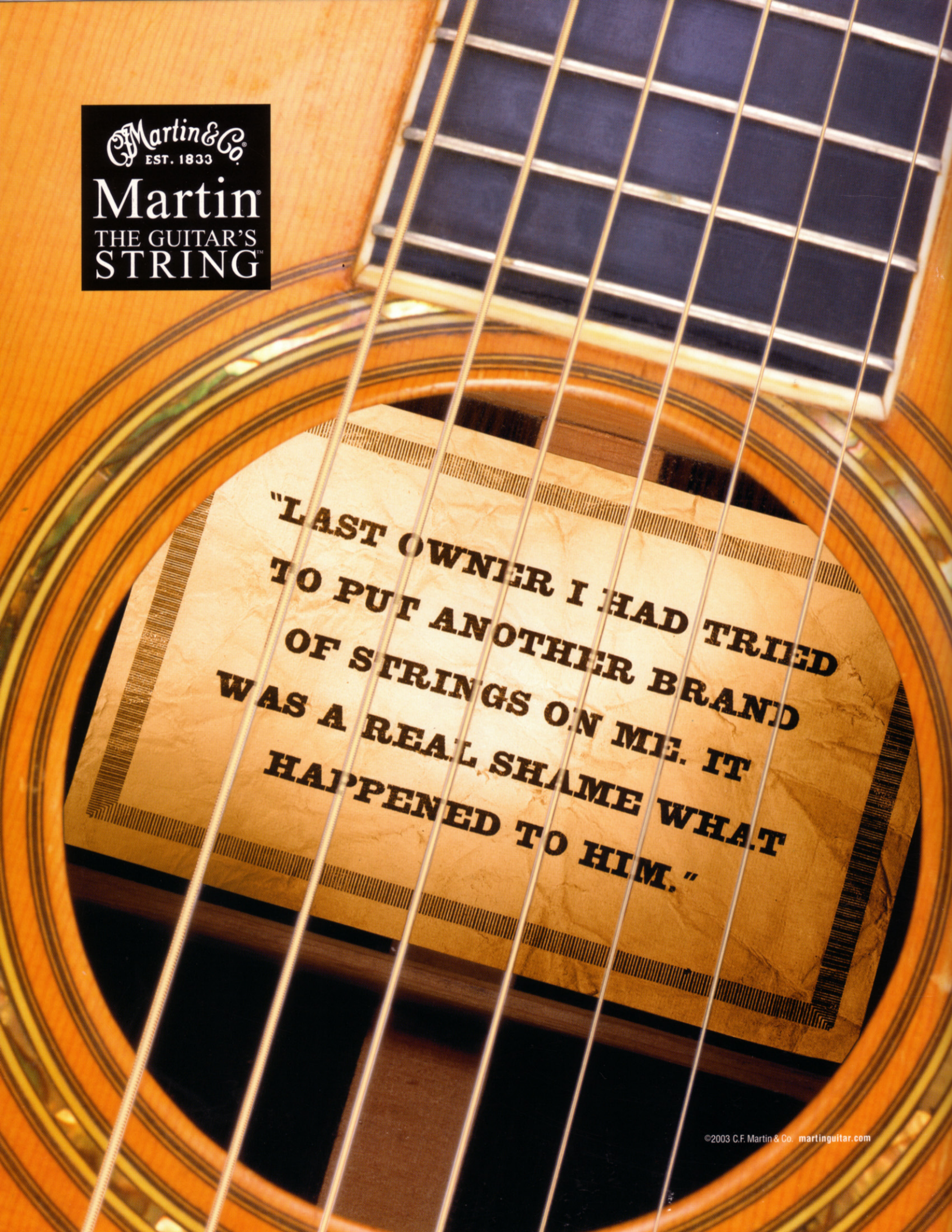
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